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THE STORMY LIFE OF MIRABEAU

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HONORÉ-GABRIEL RIQUETTI MIRABEAU

THE STORMY LIFE OF MIRABEAU

Translated from the French of

HENRY DE JOUVENEL

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

MIRABEAU has inspired almost as many works as he himself wrote. However complete may seem the bibliography in the fifth volume of the work upon his labors compiled by MM. Louis and Charles de Loménie, unpublished writings of the Deputy are being found in our time, such as the translation of *La Vie de Julius Agricola*, published in 1914, by M. Henri Welschinger, under the title: *Tacite et Mirabeau*. Besides, Mirabeau and those connected with him continue to furnish inexhaustible subjects for research and discussion. In his last years, Dauphin Meunier, a charming and erudite man recently lost to us, wrote a book on the *Comtesse de Mirabeau*, one on *Louise de Mirabeau, Marquise de Cabris*, and another entitled *Autour de Mirabeau*, which contains very curious documents. M. Herbert Van Leisen is the author of a very enlightening work with a preface by M. Jacques Bainville, entitled *Mirabeau, ou la Révolution Royale.*

But the principal sources from which I have drawn, aside from *Discours et Opinions* by Mirabeau, his letters to Julie, to the Good Angel, to 'Yet Lie,' and his correspondence with M. de La Marck, are: *Les Mémoires de Mirabeau*, in eight volumes, published by his adopted son, Lucas de Montigny, in which the favorable prejudice is obvious; *Les Mirabeau, Nouvelles Études sur la Société Française au*

Dix-Huitième Siècle, somewhat too severe on the other hand, for the authors, who are obviously enthralled with the figure of the Marquis de Mirabeau, readily take sides with the father against the son; *Sophie de Monnier et Mirabeau, d'après leur Correspondance Inédite*, by P. Cottin; *Les Souvenirs*, by Dumont; *La Vie de Mirabeau*, in two volumes, by Stern; and finally the *Mirabeau* by M. Louis Barthou, which is, at once, complete, clear, and impartial — indeed almost conclusive.

CONTENTS

I.	The Tongue-Tied Child	1
II.	The Anniversary	5
III.	An Entresol in Versailles	18
IV.	Educational Disasters	31
V.	The Accommodating Jailer	39
VI.	The Vagabond	47
VII.	Family Life	52
VIII.	M. le Comte de La Bourrasque	63
IX.	Sophie de Monnier	81
X.	An Adventure Story	99
XI.	Forty-Two Months of Prison	115
XII.	From One Court to Another	129
XIII.	A Poor Polemist	151
XIV.	The Noble Lupanar of Berlin	167
XV.	'My Day is Coming'	176
XVI.	On the Threshold of History	189
XVII.	The Founder of the Liberty of the Press	203
XVIII.	The Revolution	211
XIX.	Vain Prophecy	227
XX.	The Queen	251
XXI.	The Last Storm	279
Index		287

ILLUSTRATIONS

HONORÉ-GABRIEL RIQUETTI MIRABEAU *Frontispiece*
From an engraving by Bréa after a bust modeled from life by Desseine

THE OATH OF THE TENNIS-COURT, JUNE 20, 1789 40
From an old print by Prieur

SOPHIE DE MONNIER 88
From a photogravure in Paul Cottin's *Sophie de Monnier et Mirabeau* of a portrait attributed to Heinsius

CAMILLE DESMOULINS AT THE ROYAL PALACE, VERSAILLES, JULY 12, 1789 126
From an old print by Prieur

CAPTURE OF DE LAUNAY, GOVERNOR OF THE BASTILLE, JULY 14, 1789 168
From an old print by Prieur

OPENING OF THE STATES-GENERAL AT VERSAILLES, MAY 5, 1789 206
From an old print designed by C. Monet

MIRABEAU AND THE MARQUIS DE DREUX-BREZÉ 224
From a heliotype of the painting by Eugène Delacroix in Moreau-Nélaton's *Delacroix Raconté par Lui-Même*

THE MARKET-WOMEN ON THEIR WAY TO VERSAILLES, OCTOBER 5, 1789 242
From an old print by Prieur

THE STORMY LIFE OF MIRABEAU

CHAPTER I

The Tongue-Tied Child

On the ninth of March, 1749, extraordinary preparations animated the little Château de Bignon, which lay hidden with its village between Nemours and Montargis at the far end of a grassy plain. No one could have told whether it was the beginning of a funeral or a festival from observing the constrained air of the peasants who passed in and out, taking off their sabots and putting them on again at the threshold, nor from seeing the saddled horses tethered in a row and the quivering of servants' caps behind the window panes.

The doubt became heavier as one entered the crowded library, where several neighboring squires shoved each other before the chimney-place in the hope of monopolizing the fire, while the attorney, the gamekeeper, and the registrar stood together in a stiff and dignified fashion, separating themselves from a half-dozen villagers who were ranged against the bookshelves and were so motionless and swarthy that they seemed to have been bound with the volumes.

Crossing and recrossing the room without rest between these varied groups, intimate with the noblemen, familiar with the peasants, was a robust and bilious personage in whose face, as agitated as his gestures, the eyes glinted at once with fury, uneasiness, and irony.

At times the long cry of a woman, coming from the upper floor, stopped the walking and talking.

Suddenly the door opened, admitting a tall frigate captain. He dragged one leg a little, but his fine calm face resembled that of the master of the house as a portrait does its caricature. A rapid and tender embrace followed. A presentation was made:

'My younger brother, the Chevalier de Mirabeau.'

The two men moved aside into a window alcove. The newcomer questioned in a low voice:

'Have the pains begun?'

'They have been going on for thirty hours.'

'May she not give birth to a fourth daughter!'

'Never fear. The Duc de Nivernais told me a sure way to have a boy. . . . Do you wish to go to see her?'

'Thanks, no. Considering her usual modesty, the whole village and the stables must be up there now.'

The woman's scream began again, so tearing and shrill and long that the men paled. Finally it subsided to a hoarse plaint, weak and unending. Then a final shriek, wilder than the rest, and silence fell. In the library each one kept his eyes on the floor and privately believed he felt death hovering over.

A noise of steps and a voice the length of the stairway, and the doctor entered, worn out:

'Don't be alarmed, M. le Marquis.'

The Marquis seemed about to fall.

But he straightened again, looked the doctor in the face, suddenly calm.

'Well, tell me.'

'M. le Marquis, you have a son.'

'The mother?'

'She is living.'

'Well, then, why tell me not to be alarmed?' A trembling seized the Marquis, whether from anger, fear, or joy. 'Why? I have a son. At least he's not going to die. It was enough that one should have!'

'Oh! M. le Marquis has nothing to fear. This one is rugged and strong. He already has two teeth.'

'Like Louis XIV! Do you hear, Chevalier?' laughed the father. 'My son is born with two teeth! Two royal teeth. He will govern France.'

'Only,' resumed the doctor, very quickly and very low, 'he has a twisted foot.'

'You were awkward!'

The Marquis glanced at his brother's leg.

'At least, it wasn't a doctor made you that way. It was a cannon shot.'

'And then,' continued the doctor in a still lower key, as though he were determined to be revenged by a worse misfortune . . .

'And then . . .'

'He is tongue-tied and will certainly have difficulty in speaking.' [1]

[1] I hope not to burden this book with footnotes. But the details recounted here might seem so unlikely that I beg the reader to look at the following lines taken from a letter of the Marquis de Mirabeau, dated October, 1780: 'One cannot question that he has been the child of my attentions and anxieties, ever since that first day when they came to find me and show me that he was tongue-tied and had a twisted ankle, and began by saying: "Don't be alarmed."'

CHAPTER II

The Anniversary

THE windows of the library at Bignon were opened to the springtime. The sun played on the gold of the bookbindings. The Marquis de Mirabeau, at his table, was reading aloud a letter from his brother, now become Governor of Guadeloupe. The Marquise, 'covered with dangling skirts' and a sort of bed jacket, her right leg crossed over her left thigh, 'her ankle twisted, her head nearly touching her knees,' hemmed intensely at towels and napkins without listening. But on a sofa, straining his ears, was a little stocky monster of five years with a puffed and pock-marked face, from whom the servants turned with an awe-struck fright, as though they had seen the 'nephew of Satan' appear.

The reading was finished. The Marquise took no notice of it. The Marquis looked at her. The child looked at both of them.

'Have you reflected, madame, that to-day is the twenty-first of April, 1754, and that we should celebrate the eleventh anniversary of our marriage?'

The Marquise, who was doubtless overcome by this revelation, raised above the linen a face the features of which only too well explained those of her son, uncrossed her legs, scattered a wave of towels on the floor, threw herself on her husband's lap, and covered his face with kisses.

Overwhelmed, the husband grimaced under her assault.

'Eh, my dear, you forget that I am nearly forty.'

Then, embarrassed by the presence of the child:

'Gabriel, why haven't you gone out to play with your sisters?'

'You promised me the story of the Silver Collar,' answered Gabriel, imperturbable and attentive to the spectacle. His tongue was now loosed and his foot straight.

The Marquis saw a means of relieving himself of his wife's effusion, which had happily begun to wear itself out.

'This child can never hear too much about his grandfather.'

And shaking himself, he sat upright and began:

'At the battle of Cassano, in 1705, my father Jean-Antoine de Riquetti, Marquis de Mirabeau, was ordered to defend a bridge against the Austrians. He made all the soldiers lie down on the ground and remained standing alone, at his full height, which was greater than that of your uncle, who is, however, six feet eight.

'The enemy saw only him and fired on him alone. A shot broke his right arm and he tied this useless member to his neck with a handkerchief, seized an axe with his remaining hand, and used it as a sailor does in grappling a ship. Another bullet went through his throat, cut the jugular vein and the nerves of his neck. He fell. The regiment, having lost its commander, took flight. There was just

time enough for a sergeant to throw a copper saucepan on the head of his colonel. A curious kind of shield! The cavalry of Prince Eugène arrived and passed completely over the body of my father. The infantry followed. When evening came, the wounded were gathered up. A prisoner recognized his colonel, who was always superbly attired.' Here he cast a glance at the toilet of the Marquise, who had returned to her towels. 'In honor of the nobility and valor of such a commander, Prince Eugène had the body carried back to the Duc de Vendôme. Fortunately the great surgeon Dumoulin was there and, noticing that the body still breathed, accomplished the miracle of sewing the head back to the trunk from which it was almost detached. He fastened it there with a collar of silver, which the hero never removed, but always was elegant enough' (another glance at the Marquise) 'to hide under the pleat of his cravat. It was this which earned him his nickname of Silver Collar.'

The child was breathless.

'And his marriage,' he begged.

'The little fellow knows the story as well as I. No matter! It is well that he should take his grandfather for a model, his grandfather's actions for examples and his virtues for lessons. Well, then, this hero was not yet completely recovered when a young lady of the highest beauty and birth, twenty years younger than he, Mlle. de Castellane, fell in love with him to the point of refusing all her other suitors. And so it was that, three years after having

been killed, your grandfather with his arm slung in a scarf and his neck fastened on by a collar, married your grandmother, by whom he had seven children.'

Gabriel applauded, but was not yet satisfied.

'And the story of the convent, papa?'

The Marquis yielded to the pleasure it gave him to admire himself in his ancestors.

'One day in Italy, the soldiers of my father's regiment deserted and hid themselves in a convent. The colonel demanded them back. The abbot refused to give them up, invoking the law of sanctuary. Your grandfather didn't like a joke, my child. He stood in front of the monastery and announced that he would blow up the gates. At last they were opened, showing the abbot in his robes, *in pontificalibus*, all his monks behind and the Holy Sacrament before. The colonel was religious, but he wouldn't have been put to flight by the Pope himself.

'"Dauphin," he said to his major, "call the chaplain of the regiment and have him take the Host out of the hands of this rascal."

'The Mirabeaux, my son, have always had these salient peculiarities which have maintained their dignity and put fear into rogues. They have held their liberty of speech and action as more precious than honors or even security. This was so even as early as the thirteenth century, at the time when the Riquetti called themselves Arrighetti and let themselves be banished from Florence rather than bow down before the triumph of the Guelf Party.'

An irreverent laugh interrupted the words of the Marquis, who became more disconcerted than his father had been before the monastery. The Marquise, her nose on her needle, laughed as though she were crazy.

'Enough stories for to-day, Gabriel. Go and join your sisters.'

Gabriel, at this paternal order, the sudden severity of which did not even surprise him, got up and went away in silence, walking too heavily for his age.

The Marquis followed him with his eyes.

'That child is really very homely. He is the perfect image of his odious grandfather, M. de Vassan.'

Mme. de Mirabeau, bent over her interminable work, only shrugged her shoulders, but she did it enough times so that her husband could not think that the gesture was involuntary.

'And into the bargain you had to give him smallpox,' he continued, 'with your silly fear of inoculation. Between your family and the doctors, I wonder how I shall be able to save my offspring.'

Again the shoulders were shrugged. The sight of this bundle of linen and woman, silent but shaking all over, exasperated the Marquis.

'But speak. Say something!'

'You will just say again that I have a Limousin accent.'

'As if there were nothing else with which to reproach you! M. de Montesquieu, who is cleverer than you (no offense meant), certainly has a Gascon accent.'

'In any case,' declared the Marquise, deciding to face him, 'you are wrong to taunt me with my father and then wish that your son respect his ancestors.'

'Respect can choose.'

'And yours chooses the Arrighetti?' Her recent laugh broke out again.

'And what of it?'

'Don't you find that it is going a little too far, this respect? As far back as 1257, I believe? When it might so well stop with Jean Riquetti, who bought the Château de Mirabeau three hundred years later and whom even in that day, unless I am mistaken, the letters of the King designated as "merchant of Marseilles."'

The Marquis drew from the bookshelves an enormous quarto volume of genealogy entitled '*la Toscane française*,' as though to knock his insolent wife on the head with it. But she just burst out laughing again:

'Leave it alone, leave it alone. I know all about it.

'How much did your great-grandfather, Thomas, pay for this fine work to Messire Baptiste l'Hermite de Soliers, called Tristan, who was so justly denounced as a forger by Charles d'Hozier, a man who really knew his genealogy? You are a marquis of 1685 exactly, my friend. That is what you should tell your son, instead of always slandering his mother's family which has possessed the first baronetcy of Limousin since 1626.'

'What is still more interesting is that monsieur your father had himself made a marquis in order to marry: a thing which monsieur your grandfather hadn't yet thought of, madame.'

'And how about your having married me for my fortune, for you saw my notary before you saw me, monsieur.'

'Yes, your fortune! Let's talk about it, since you love the subject, you and your relations. Did your rich family even give you a trousseau? In order to get three thousand two hundred livres of income out of your estate of Saulvebœuf, I had to be as persistent and clever as I did to straighten out your child's ankle. From my estates I had sixteen thousand livres of income, madame, before our charming nuptials. And to-day, have I six thousand left?'

'Is it my fault if you bought the Duchy of Roquelaure in the hope of making yourself a duke some day? Or if, after having refused to give your wife a cent, you feed twenty-five servants and ruin us by building in Bignon, Paris, Mirabeau, Limousin, and, I believe, in Gascony?'

At this point in the conversation the Marquise, realizing the extent of her misfortune, melted in tears.

'What a marriage anniversary!' she flung out between two sobs.

Then she stood up, opened her arms wide, and cried, 'Let's forget everything. Kiss me, Victor.'

But the Marquis didn't respond to the use of his first name. His two dearest convictions had been

touched upon. The nobility of his over-exalted house and his ability as administrator had been blasphemed. That called for reprobation. These tears, by which his wife slipped out of critical situations, only exasperated him further. His long-stifled fury spilled out in invectives. He recalled all his griefs in angry confusion: the coming of the Vassans to Mirabeau after the marriage, making for the young people an escort of thirty-two mouths to feed; their departure without leaving a gift; the insidious and brazen education they had given their daughter; her eternal babble, her way of contradicting which made their intimates call her 'Madame Xanthippe,' and the ridiculousness of her hugs which had obliged the Marquis to give up all public responsibility, all official functions. He stormed about her incapacity to read a serious book, the scenes of tears and reconciliation with which she overwhelmed him, the disorder in her room characteristic of the habitations of street-walkers, her carelessness at showing herself disheveled and with bare bosom to workmen, to merchants, to idlers, to valets, her lateness at table, and, above all, the pock-marked face of her horrible son. He finished, calling upon the gods:

'The eleven years I have just passed with this mad woman have been eleven years of colic.'

'Col . . .'

The Marquise choked, hesitated a moment between swooning and crying out. Then, no longer feeling energy enough to faint, she exclaimed:

'There is only one thing left for me to do,' and slammed the door, leaving behind her a train of fallen towels.

The Marquis swept them with his foot into the vestibule, pushed the bolt, took a long breath, and returned to his desk. He took from the drawers a perfectly arranged series of hand-written notebooks, on which could be read: *Terre de Mirabeau, Terre de Bignon, Hôtel de la rue Bergère, Terre de Saulvebœuf, Duché de Roquelaure, Terre de Biran, Testament politique, Mémoire concernant l'utilité des États provinciaux relativement à l'autorité royale, Examen des poésies de M. Lefranc de Pompignan.*

'My children will not be able to say that I was not orderly,' he thought.

Having thus complimented himself, he replaced his work with care, day-dreamt, opened another notebook scarcely begun, re-read the last sentence, written that morning: *If I were master, I would make a law to increase the matrimonial rights of every mother who nurses her children*, and he tranquilly took up again the work at the point where he had left it.

When he grew tired of thinking and writing, he went out to oversee the work of the servants.

No one was about the château. At the stables, there was no one. The master was surprised:

'What are these lazy people doing?'

He turned in his tracks and went into the wood-house which led to the outside of the kitchen, and stopped.

Some one was delivering a speech.

'This is too much! It sounds like Gabriel's voice!'

The Marquis approached on tiptoe, and sprang quickly back again. He had seen. All the servants were there, indeed, hanging on the words of Gabriel, who, perched on the big table, was in his turn recounting the battle of Cassano.

The Marquis listened, quite enraptured. But soon he was stupefied.

'He is adding to it,' he whispered.

Indeed, the recent recital was now amplified and made more precise. The regiments were named as they passed. One could hear the horses' hoofs striking the copper saucepan which covered the head of the fallen grandfather! The wheel of a cannon flung him onto the bank of a river. He was about to fall in.

Here a servant cried out with fear. Magnificent, the child continued. Now he evoked the glory of the Mirabeaux, tracing it throughout the history of France as far back as Roman history. The blood of the Marquis Jean-Antoine no longer went back only as far as the Arrighetti of Florence. It went beyond them, skipped over centuries, discovered that it derived from Mark Antony, the rival of Pompey and Cæsar.

The father was compelled to slip away lest he burst out laughing and disturb the assembly.

Once outside, he said:

'Ah, well, certainly this child is thoroughly cured

of being tongue-tied.' He was happy. Pride of race swelled within him.

'I believe,' thought he, 'that with that child there I will be able at last to realize my great dream: to elevate a family of Provence to the dignity of a family of France.'

The Marquis walked across the village, responding to all greetings, placing his hand on the shoulder of this person, speaking a few words with that one. He had always considered the peasants his friends, his family, shared his joys with them, taken part in their troubles, relieved their famine in bad years, as he had gathered in their gifts in the good. He was beloved and he loved to be beloved by them. He thought that men were brothers, and that gentlemen had elder brothers' birthrights. Besides, his thoughts went beyond those who surrounded him, beyond even the frontiers of the kingdom, vagabonded around the world, imagined a system of general fraternity. He was optimistic this evening, promised himself to write in this work which he had started and which was to move the world: 'From this time on Europe will not know tranquillity unless we work to fraternize in the new world as well as in the old.'

He jotted down the sentence in a notebook he always carried.

The bell which announced the evening meal tore him from his happy meditation. He would have to find the Marquise again.

M. Poisson, barrister at the Parliament, who at

the same time served as secretary to himself and tutor to his son, awaited him on the threshold of the library.

A courier had arrived from Mirabeau. The registrar advised the Marquis to ask that warrants be taken out against two young men of the commune who had spoken badly of their lord.

The Marquis hesitated a moment.

'I have never yet asked for warrants of arrest against any one.'

'Everything has to have a beginning,' philosophized M. Poisson, who knew not how well he prophesied.

The Marquis decided to sign. His mother entered and announced with a gayety very rare in her that her daughter-in-law would not come down to dinner. The Marquis felt easier.

'My dear Poisson,' he smiled, 'you are teaching Roman history to my son. It seems to me that he is making great progress.'

'M. le Marquis, that child retains everything. There are Bachelors of Art who don't know as much.'

'And who invent less. Go tell him that he will have dry bread this evening for having spouted lies this afternoon in the kitchen.'

After which the Marquis de Mirabeau felt it his duty to go into the dining-room.

But an idea struck him, an idea he had pursued a long time and which now imposed itself with compelling force. This beautiful day which was coming to its close, the discovery he had made of his son, the

delicious absence of his wife, the pride that he felt in duty accomplished, his fraternal stroll among the peasants, had revealed him to himself. He had found the title for his future book and, he thought, the motto for his life. On the virgin title-page of the manuscript he had begun, he hurried to write:

L'Ami des hommes

Meanwhile M. Poisson had gone to carry the fatal news to the child. He had not finished when the boy, surprised while reading, straightened himself up, turned over the inkwell, struck the table with his fist, cried that it was all the same to him, that he was not hungry, but that things should not go on like this. If he were to be reproached for apologizing for his family, he would tell the story of his uncle, he of whom they never spoke, who had married a woman of evil life, as Brigitte said. M. Poisson, not knowing how to stop this torrent, preferred to depart after locking in the angry boy. The child kicked the door of the room fiercely until he fell asleep from fatigue.

M. Poisson, having made sure from outside that the hubbub had ceased, went to bed in his turn and thought, in drawing the covers up to his chin:

'When M. le Marquis says that "for five hundred years people have put up with Mirabeaux who were not made like the rest of mankind," he may perhaps exaggerate the length of time, but one must admit, to quote his words, that they are a "stormy race."'

CHAPTER III

An Entresol in Versailles

THESE Mirabeaux, so smitten with their own nobility, were to attain, the father, celebrity, the son, glory, by plebeian means: the book and speech.

The patrician soul of the Chevalier, now Bailiff de Mirabeau, was afflicted with some humiliation when he considered the type of success which the Marquis had achieved:

'I know,' he wrote in 1775 to his elder brother, 'that one receives personal consideration in Paris as elsewhere when one merits it. Still I have not entirely overlooked their attempt to confound you with men of talent: like Diderot, or like d'Alembert, etc. . . . Parisians seek to put men of merit in that category.'

This confusion between men of talent and men of quality, that the Bailiff would not forgive in the capital, shocked the Marquis a great deal less since the day when the publication of *l'Ami des hommes* aroused a fury of appreciation which made him quoted in all salons, translated into all languages, invoked before law courts, consulted by princes and praised by pamphlets in terms of which one can judge by this simple sentence from the *Journal Encyclopédique de Bouillon*, July, 1757: 'The author writes like Montaigne and thinks like Montesquieu.'

L'Ami des hommes had made agriculture the

fashion, at least in conversation. Treatises and pamphlets were born out of his theory on the conversion and redemption of incomes which was energetically summed up in this formula: 'The capitalist is an idler who fritters away his time; all the evils of society are due to him.' He awakened interest by demanding absolute freedom of foreign and domestic commerce as well as the brotherhood of nations — both very novel ideas.

But above all he affected people emotionally. Did they not owe to him that often plagiarized sentence, 'Huge fortunes are in a State what pikes are in a pond'? Was it not he who cried out, 'Honor the little men'? Had he not preached that it was an honor for a gentleman 'to receive the touch of a beggar whose infectious odor and whose rags reproach him with a brotherhood he has failed to recognize'? Finally had he not dared to predict: 'Those who do not see the danger are indeed blind for it touches us'?

This sensitive and witty eighteenth century, which laughed at God and grew tender at the thought of primitive man, which respected no institution and believed in all dreams, had just caught a glimpse in *l'Ami des hommes* of a new aspect to the political and social problem which had begun to torment them: the economic aspect. Seized with the same ecstasy at the appearance of each novelty, 'the nation, satiated with verses, tragedies, romantic stories, moral reflections even more romantic, discussions on etiquette and convulsions, set itself to

reasoning about wheat,' according to Voltaire. The women were not the last to do so, and thus the Marquis knew that if political economy did not easily succeed in assuring the happiness of all men, it could at times bring happiness to one.

So, in order to follow his calling, to propagate that which he spoke of as 'my science,' to hold the admiration which now played attendance upon him, and especially that of 'a friend lovely as the day, then endowed with thirty years of age, but with a very mature mind,' Mme. de Pailly, the Marquis de Mirabeau prepared a new glory in 1760.

During the first days of October, he received the proofs of a book entitled *Théorie de l'Impôt* at his residence in the rue des Saints-Pères which he occupied at the time.

After having looked them over, he ordered his two sons and their tutor to come down.

M. Poisson soon appeared, pushing before him Gabriel, who, ugly but robust, was approaching his twelfth year, and also the boy whom his father called his 'darling child,' little Boniface with charming features, five years younger than Gabriel.

The Marquis smiled at Boniface and hesitated an instant:

'He is still too young,' said he. 'I am very sorry.'

Turning then with a severe expression, toward the eldest, he solemnly announced:

'To-morrow you will receive an honor which you scarcely deserve. As a miracle would be necessary to make an honest man of you some day, I will take

you to the only person capable of accomplishing it in this world.'

At once, M. le Comte and his tutor were commanded to be ready to leave at eleven o'clock the next morning and then every one found himself out of the room, for the Friend of Man felt that, though one ought not to keep one's distance with any one, it was necessary to make an exception when his children were concerned.

All evening Gabriel sought a means of falling ill, and found none. The next day he had to leave at the stated hour. M. Poisson carried the *Théorie de l'Impôt* with as much precaution as if he were carrying the taxes themselves. When the post-chaise was on its way:

'We are going to visit the Confucius of Europe,' the Marquis said with simplicity.

Gabriel, more and more troubled, wondered to himself what these mysterious words could mean. Day by day he had more fear of his father. Thus he did not dare ask a single question. At his side M. Poisson remained silent.

As they approached the walls, the Marquis leaned forward and suddenly stopped the horses. He had just noticed, newly painted on a baker's shop, this sign:

The Friend of Man

It was not the only one of its kind in Paris. But an author comes to life at each encounter with fame. M. Poisson was asked to go and buy some cakes.

The tutor was not at all stupid. One could see that well enough when the baker rushed out, refused to be paid, and aroused his neighbors and the passers-by with the shout: 'Here is the Marquis de Mirabeau! Behold the defender of the people! Behold the Friend of Man!' Nothing more was ever needed to draw a crowd to the pavement. The carriage was promptly surrounded with people of all ages who joined in the shout, without knowing exactly why. The Marquis climbed down onto the carriage step, shook the hand of the baker, and the people applauded.

Gabriel was aware of a new and delicious emotion at this moment. The enthusiasm of the applause was communicated to him. He felt himself greater, stronger, more tender. He stood up and felt within him the desire to run, to gesticulate, to prove his accomplishments. It seemed to him that these men, these women and children, were his material, a dough which waited to be kneaded by him. He bowed instinctively, as if the ovation had been intended for him. A slap seated him. The first smile of popularity had just faded.

Gabriel didn't like long carriage trips during which children had to sit still. He was particularly irritated when they walked the horses. Justin had never held them in so much as to-day. One o'clock in the afternoon had sounded in some church, when the Marquis announced: 'Here we are.' At the end of the wide avenue de Paris, Gabriel saw the sovereign mass of the Château de Versailles approaching, blotting out

the horizon and commanding the low roofs of the city. He recognized the palace, having often looked at it in the engravings of Israel Silvestre which hung on the walls of his room, and, overwhelmed with a glorious emotion, he thought: 'I am going to the King's palace.'

At last he understood who the Confucius was of whom his father expected a miracle.

Men and women on horseback now animated the scene. Shortly the carriage of the Marquis de Mirabeau came out on the place d'Armes and passed the stage-coach of the rue Saint-Nicaise which for twenty-five sous delivered visitors there twice a day. It was necessary to parley with the guards at the iron gateway to the front courtyard and to drive down to the threshold of the royal courtyard, which then enclosed, at the spot where they have since erected the equestrian statue of Louis XIV, a second curved iron railing shutting off the carriages of those who did not enjoy the honors of the Louvre.

Gabriel felt slightly hurt to see personages passing superbly in carriages where his father and he were obliged to walk. But a nobleman on horseback recognized the Marquis and jumped to the ground, throwing his bridle to a valet. It was the Duc de Nivernais. The two friends stopped to talk together. Gabriel and M. Poisson waited at a respectful distance.

The child stared round-eyed at the clamorous crowd which went up and came down, filling the courtyard with a constant murmur. He had never

seen so many different uniforms. His tutor had difficulty in answering his questions and in explaining the various showy costumes. He easily recognized the light cavalry, the bodyguards, the Swiss guards, the provost guards, but began to hesitate before the white jackets starred with silver and gold of the four special bodyguards whose principal function was not to lose sight of the King during the time that he spent at mass. Suddenly the child, who up to now had been lost in admiration, shook with laughter at the sight of a negro cymbalist. It was worse still when the Hundred Swiss arrived in a troop with their halberds, their motley doublets, and their huge plumes. Gabriel couldn't contain himself any longer. He seemed to be present at an immense parade of dolls intended for the amusement of a magnificent child. In vain M. Poisson insisted that he be silent and respectful. Fortunately the Marquis had turned his back and had begun to make his way toward the palace beside the Duc.

'One would say,' remarked the latter, 'that you were going, as I am, to the Marquise?'

'I am going higher up.'

'To His Majesty?'

'No, to Quesnay.'

'Eh! He is indeed a personage. Evidently, if the King can't do without La Pompadour, La Pompadour can't do without her doctor.'

Arrived at the ground-floor apartment which the favorite occupied, the two men separated and Mirabeau climbed to one of the entresols with

which Louis XV encumbered Versailles at that time.

'Remember,' said the Marquis before entering, 'that your future, and probably the future of all Frenchmen, depends on the man who receives us here.'

But Gabriel was disappointed. He had believed that the King was waiting for him.

'Welcome, my friend, you and your son,' said Dr. Quesnay.

'Gracious,' thought the son, 'Confucius, why, it's a monkey's name.'

Indeed, there was some resemblance between that animal and the person who was to become the chief of the Physiocrats.

'It is possible that he can do tricks,' Gabriel said to himself. 'But miracles!'

Oh, unbelievable! His redoubtable father, before whom all trembled, bowed very low before the monkey and called him 'Master.' Gabriel remembered a festival day when the servants had poured him a few glasses too many and he had seen all the trees and the walls turn around him. Only now it seemed to him that it was no longer his head that turned, but the heads of others, and that since he had put his foot in Versailles he had begun to live a story in which the actors were stripped of all reality and the natural order of things totally reversed.

'This boy is your eldest?' asked the doctor.

'I have older daughters.'

'I hope they are well.'

'I hope so also,' answered the Marquis, 'for it is four years since I have seen them. They are at the convent of Montargis.'

The doctor was not surprised, but asked the boy:

'What are you going to do when you are grown up?'

'I'm going to the wars,' answered Gabriel heroically, because he wanted to be complimented.

'That is very stupid,' the Master articulated slowly, and he turned away.

At two o'clock they lunched.

Around the table were a magistrate of Orléans, with a sensible enough face, M. Le Trosne, a little Abbé Baudeau, 'opinionated and cutting' according to Grimm, and a handsome, sullen young man by the name of Turgot.

Gabriel would willingly have done without the honor of being invited, and found that, considering everything, it wasn't worth the trouble of having come to Versailles to meet only plebeians. He was at the age of prejudices.

He noticed shortly that only M. Poisson and he ate seriously; the others preferred to talk, except Turgot, who restrained himself to a few imperious and brief formulas. This did not stop the boy, for he was hungry and understood nothing of the discussion, which to him was only noise about 'an economic government of an agricultural realm,' economic catechism, economic panel of juries — and above all the 'ethics of the net product.'

He believed, however, that he discerned that these

men wished to constitute a sect which would set itself the task of reforming the kingdom from top to bottom, by demonstrating 'to all men that there is no state, no position, in which the most honest and most just course would not obviously be the most profitable, the most easily reckoned, from this day, from this moment even.'

With the simplicity of his years, he judged that this was a plot, and thought it very strange that men should come to conspire in the very palace of the King. He had never read anything more surprising in Roman history. His suspicion seemed confirmed when, after the repast, the Marquis, opening the work he had brought with him, began to read:

'My lord, you have twenty million men and subjects, more or less. All these men have some money; they are almost all capable of the kind of service that you ask, and yet you can no longer have services without money, nor money to pay for the services. . . .'

'That's it,' cried the Abbé Baudeau. 'Like that, this lord-king has nothing more at all.'

'That is the way to talk to the King,' offered Dr. Quesnay, very happily.

At this moment, Mme. du Hausset, chambermaid to the Marquise de Pompadour, entered:

'His Majesty needs you, dear doctor,' said she.

'His Maj . . . Oh! I must run,' said Quesnay, with an attitude of fear and sudden obsequiousness. 'Is His Majesty below, in the Marquise's apartment?'

'No, above, in the corner study.'

'Excuse me, my . . .'

The doctor didn't have time to finish his sentence. They heard his hurried step behind the door.

No one appeared surprised at the apparent contradiction between the 'That is the way to talk to the King,' and the 'This is the way one talks,' except Gabriel, who thought himself certainly at the theater.

Then M. Poisson, who had already read the *Théorie de l'Impôt* several times, asked permission to take the child to visit the gardens.

Outside, Gabriel found that things gave him the same impression the people had in the morning. With the disclosure of this vast arrangement which he had never observed in nature, of such well-pruned trees, of these alleys arranged as though for review, of symmetrical statues which seemed to have grown in their places by accident, he conceived it all to be an immense toy invented to divert some puerile demigod.

As the two strollers climbed back toward the terraces, they saw a disorderly crowd coming. An officer marched ahead and cried:

'Make way for His Majesty!'

Gabriel stood on his tiptoes. M. Poisson pointed out the King, but the child could not recognize him. This was the supreme disillusionment of the day.

Upon returning to Dr. Quesnay's entresol, they heard his father's voice continuing to read:

'We arrive at that terrible period when the gov-

ernment hopes for nothing from its citizens, and when the citizens hope for nothing from the government; fatal epoch when the breath of a child can overturn states.'

The reading and the day were finished. The Marquis de Mirabeau took his leave, accompanied to the gate by the congratulations of the founder of the physiocratic school, attendant to La Pompadour.

'I hope,' said the father, 'that Gabriel will never forget this day.'

'Never,' swore the son.

While the Marquis developed with M. Poisson the subject of instructing children by contact with great men and the example of their lives, Gabriel went to sleep in the carriage and dreamed from jolt to jolt that he breathed on Versailles and crumbled successively hundreds of motleyed and bedizened dolls, among whom was one which resembled all the rest and was called the King. At the news of this miracle, an immense throng filled the streets and the avenues with a cheering which awoke him suddenly. The carriage had just stopped in the rue des Saints-Pères.

The *Théorie de l'Impôt* was published two months later, December 10, 1760. On December 16, on the complaint of the financiers who held the right to take farm property in place of taxes, and whose suppression was demanded in the book, the King gave the order to arrest the Marquis de Mirabeau and conduct him to Vincennes. This was passed off very gallantly.

'Sir,' said the officer who carried the message, 'my orders do not demand that you hurry. To-morrow, if you have not time to-day.'

'No, monsieur, the orders of the King cannot be too quickly obeyed. I awaited them.'

And the Marquis left, carrying in his trunk the *Thoughts* of Marcus Aurelius, and the *Proverbs* of Solomon, and a collection of provincial proverbs. His lackey was very surprised to see him laugh to himself four minutes after they had slid the bolts. The proverbs would serve some purpose, and, besides, there was the adventure, for the imprisonment of authors has always helped the fortune of their books.

On December 24 the sentence was commuted into an order of exile to Bignon, so much the sweeter for the Marquis since Mme. de Pailly wished to go into exile also.

Gabriel and his brother were left in Paris with their tutor and the memory of the examples set by a father whom prison had covered with honor and love.

They took advantage of it by refusing absolutely to work.

CHAPTER IV

Educational Disasters

Having neither the fine library of M. Louis Barthou nor his spirit of discovery at our disposition, we fear we will not be able to satisfy the taste for the unpublished which is so lively in our epoch. Fortunately, as we have seen in the first chapter, the Marquis de Mirabeau arranged his notebooks with great care. One of them has fallen into our hands. It contains a curious correspondence which, by a happy chance, exactly suits this place.

To M. le Marquis de Mirabeau

January 1, 1764

Let M. le Marquis at this beginning of the year deign to permit me, a poor man maintained by his kindness, to express fervent wishes for the happiness of his life, the success of his doctrine, and the future of his house.

The confidence with which M. le Marquis has been kind enough to honor me for such long years is my only blessing on earth. Truth obliges me to say that I would cease to merit it were I to wish to continue for another year my duties as tutor of M. le Comte and M. le Chevalier de Mirabeau.

If there is much sweetness in the latter's laziness, such is not the case, M. le Marquis, with the eldest of your house. M. le Comte is in every way beyond me. He knows many things which I never told him

and practically none that I teach him. He instructs himself and covers his notebooks with notes which he hides from me, but he does not hesitate, when I state to him the most established facts, to oppose me with denials which humble my science and with reasons which trouble my mind. Upon his return from his two months of unjustly suffered exile, M. le Marquis was kind enough to give me the reënforcement of several other masters in order to curb the mettle of my student, which has only made itself too apparent since then. But these masters all renounced their duties, one after another, even the fencing master. I remain alone. Alone and insufficient.

This is why, now, when M. le Comte is about to have his fifteenth birthday, I pray M. le Marquis kindly to relieve me of my functions and to deign to accept the homage of a devotion and a respect that will last as long as life.

From the most humble and the most grateful of his servitors, POISSON

De Sigrais, Captain of Cavalry
Member of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres
To Monsieur le Marquis de Mirabeau
at his residence, rue de Vaugirard, Paris

VERSAILLES, *May* 25, 1764

MY DEAR MARQUIS:

You know with what joy three months ago to-day Mme. de Sigrais and I received M. de Pierre-Buf-

fière, your son, for whom you instructed me to be both tutor and jailer. It seemed to us, as to yourself, that in changing the environment of this young man, in obliging him to change even his name, we should make ourselves sufficiently master of his personality to teach him customs of good company. Alas! This sort of disposition 'vituperosa,' which you know in him, has not left him at all. Try as I might to inculcate in him the love of fine literature, which ordinarily develops courtesy, he claimed that he had no need of me to appreciate it and that my way of praising it tempted him to hate it. Do not think, my dear Marquis, that I could be hurt by these remarks. I am consoled by the approbation of the Institute. I only deplore that M. Pierre-Buffière shows himself so insensitive to true beauty.

The physical correction that his childhood friend, whom we lodge, was with your permission to inflict upon him, did not produce a much more happy effect. The young man is of a size to return blows and to win respect for himself as the first Baron de Limousin. You see that in giving up the name of Mirabeau for Pierre-Buffière, his pride has simply passed from one province to another. Mme. de Sigrais, who flattered herself that she exercised a gentle and good influence over him in the leisure left her by her duties to Mme. La Dauphine, has wept more than once because of him. It is not that she allows herself to love him. 'One flees at sight of him, but stops to listen to him,' she said to me one day. But this young man has no more respect for women

than for the Institute or for the King. Must I confess to you, Monsieur, that his ways have already forced me to dismiss two maids?

We assembled the other day to make him listen to reason. He listened to our speech and, when we thought that he was persuaded, replied only by singing in a voice which, by the way, is very good:

How can one do without love?
I'm willing to bet that at my age
Mama didn't know how to say no.
Each season has its rage;
Some day I too will be sage,
But why must you hurry me so?

When, being disconcerted for a moment, we became indignant at so much insolence, what was he but indignant in his turn, alleging that he had heard a great lord sing this song, who was, moreover, your friend, M. le Duc de Nivernais. If the great men were not to be taken at their word any more, they had only to yield up their place to the Third Estate.

I do not know, M. le Marquis, where M. Pierre-Buffière goes to look for his arguments nor where he goes to look for his couplets, but I would be obliged if you would take pity on a household whose tranquillity he destroys, and I pray you to believe that I remain, under all circumstances, your humble and obedient servant,

SIGRAIS

The Abbé Choquard,
Director of the boarding school for young men
situated in Paris,
rue and barrière Saint-Dominique,
To M. le Marquis de Mirabeau
at his residence

December, 1765

MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS:

The undertaking that I dare propose to you will seem the more singular because I risked one so entirely opposite not two weeks ago. Powerful motives, indeed, are necessary to make a director of an institution such as mine contradict himself so evidently. But, although I imagined that the surprises were over which the young Pierre-Buffière has caused me since June of last year when you did me the honor of confiding him to me, I have just had so great a one that I remain overwhelmed! I wondered an instant, M. le Marquis, if it was I who directed the Pension Choquard, or he.

The young man has known for several days that, tired at last of his bad conduct too often amounting to revolt, I permitted myself to advise you to place him in one of those houses of correction with which my establishment only partially occupies itself. He suspected that you had not been deaf to my counsel and that all arrangements were made. I measured by his silence his alarm, but not his projects.

However, I did not fail to notice the groups which formed around him in the recreation court. But I attached little importance to it, thinking that he

would not have much longer to harangue on our premises, and believing that his comrades, often misled by him, would be happy to be delivered from his presumption. I was not able to realize what power he has over them.

But day before yesterday you should have seen how they shed tears when they listened to him. I won't tell you, M. le Marquis, the stratagem I, in my turn, used to hear his statements that morning. I would not be worthy of directing a boarding-school if I did not know how to make use of opportunities.

You can imagine to what point I was prejudiced against this pupil, perhaps the most untidy and most insubordinate that it has ever been given me to see in the course of my career.

But I have since been beguiled, M. le Marquis, beguiled even to emotion. The terms in which Gabriel described his infancy, the sadness with which he complained of never having been loved enough by any one, the remorse that he showed for not having known how to be worthy of you, the regret at his homeliness which he said hid his soul from every one and for which his mother had never attempted to console him, moved me. All this, the fist which he raised against a world incapable of conceiving interior beauty, the pride with which he swore one day to blast the injustice in which the poor and homely live oppressed and doubly wretched, the cry he uttered, opening his arms, 'My comrades, I have only you. Will you let them take me away?' — all this attested to such an eloquence in this child, to such a

profundity of soul, and to such an aptitude for suffering, that I began to wonder, M. le Marquis, if we have not been mistaken in the method we have used with so extraordinary a subject.

In any other circumstance I should have severely punished the pupils who, after this discourse, swore in a single voice that either they would keep Pierre-Buffière or be carried off with him. To-day I confess that I did not have the heart, and when the children brought me a great petition signed by all and demanding that your son remain at the boarding-school, I promised them to intercede with you, M. le Marquis, and to pray you to consent to receive a deputation from among them.

If, after the success of my recent advice, I dared offer some more, I should permit myself to wish that you authorize your son a new trial of three months, in the course of which I will see how far gentleness will succeed where authority is without power.

With my excuses, M. le Marquis, will you accept the respect of Your very humble servant

CHOQUARD, *Abbé*

A page torn from the collection of Bachaumont was found pinned to this letter. It carried the date of January, 1767, and dealt with a eulogy on 'The Prince de Condé in Comparison with Scipio, the African,' composed and delivered at the Institute Choquard by the young Mirabeau the day of Saint Louis, on the subject of which the author of the collection wrote:

'It is evident that this young eagle already flies in the track of his illustrious father, and for this fact the anecdote becomes precious. The son has more precision, more elegance in his style and his discourse is very well written.'

This first speech of Mirabeau's has not come down to us.

Here is the last of the letters which composed the note-book. The spelling must be pardoned, since it was very estimable for the epoch.

SAINTES, *July*, 1768

MOSSIEU LE MARQUIS,

Mossieu plact mi with Mossieu le Conte too watje him and reporte so long ace Mossieu le Conte waz an oficer. He is no longer won. He left yesreday bi postechez for Paris. He as quareled with hes colonel, promized to mari a gurl off the peple and losd 80 louis gamling all the Berri cavlry feel deseeved by im. I aske for ordres.

Yur olld and faethfull domestic
veri respectfull
GREVIN

CHAPTER V

The Accommodating Jailer

THE Bailiff d'Aulan, Governor of the Île de Ré, conveyed to the prisoners he guarded on New Year's Day his best wishes for 1769, or rather his wish, for he formulated only one, and it was very well received:

'I hope that we shall be rid of each other this year.'

The Bailiff d'Aulan was sincere. His occupation did not amuse him. He had in him the makings of a great general. Alas! His chiefs were asses and had reduced him to the task of prison guardian. Are you astonished that the century was so fatal to French arms?

But the Bailiff d'Aulan felt that he would have his revenge. He did not know how nor when. He bided his time. The time to depart. Cæsar might well have said: 'It is better to be second at Versailles than first on the Île de Ré.' Keys turned. Hinges creaked: 'I hope we shall be rid of each other this year.'

The tour of the citadel was almost finished. They arrived before a double door, one side of which was open. The Bailiff d'Aulan entered a fairly large room in great disorder; a pair of torn breeches lay on an open book, a glass was turned over on the bed, and there were pages, pages, pages of paper covered in

all directions with a writing which, in its haste, ran the words together, wrote over them, filled the margins with notes, scratched them out, underlined them, multiplied the crosses, the asterisks, and the references. They were to be found on the pillow, on the chairs, on the ground, and even on the table. But Pierre-Buffière forbade his servant Grevin to touch them.

'Above all, leave things alone,' he ordered superbly.

The fact was that this Pierre-Buffière was not to be seen.

The sergeant who carried the keys trembled. He had not stopped trembling since the beginning of the visit. But he was a soldier. He did not know how to lie.

'M. le Baron did not come in last night.'

'I authorized it.'

But the Bailiff d'Aulan was a leader. He knew how to lie.

In fact, three days ago his indulgence had reached the point of permitting this young Pierre-Buffière to go with the sailboat, which brought provisions to the island, to buy a book at La Rochelle. It was so rare to find an officer who loved to read! And this one devoured dictionaries when he found nothing better.

But the sailboat had returned twice already.

Had the Bailiff d'Aulan done wrong? No, it was not he who had done wrong. It was this Colonel Marquis de Lambert, who at Saintes commanded the

THE OATH OF THE TENNIS-COURT, JUNE 20, 1789
From an old print

Berri-Cavalerie, a twenty-six-year-old colonel, to be sure, who had been appointed to guard Pierre-Buffière and his eighteen years, and who had known no better than to put him in prison from the day of his arrival until he had him shut up on the Île de Ré, leaving his subordinate, it seemed, barely the leisure to make him a cuckold. It is true that the subordinate had been made one in his turn by an archer of the mounted police of Saintes, according to police reports. Ah! Love upsets the hierarchy, and it serves it right.

The Bailiff d'Aulan was decidedly infuriated. He wanted to have it out with the court, the ministry, the favorites, and above all with the Marquis de Mirabeau, who called himself the Friend of Man. Of what man? Not of his son about whom he had written an odious letter to the commander asking for the most severe treatment, nor of his wife against whom he had taken out an arbitrary warrant for imprisonment without trial three years before. Indeed, it was decidedly a mania with this philanthropist to imprison every one, the mother in a convent in Limoges, the son in a fortress.

Pierre-Buffière alone, the first cause of the Bailiff d'Aulan's fits of anger, escaped their effects. Since he had arrived on this narrow island, the commander's life had changed so much! Now he enjoyed the reaction from his hard tête-à-tête with winter. A sort of human springtime had entered, carrying streams of hope, gusts of fantasy, and this radiant noise which astonished the sad walls, the

laugh of youth. It was not a prisoner, it was a son they had sent him. If only he would come back! During these last days the Bailiff had been absorbed in the accounts and the statements of the year's end, all the dirty scribbling for M. de Choiseul. He would be delighted to dine with his young friend, to-day, a festival day. What if he should not come back! What would the Minister say? And he himself, what would he do, abandoned to his solitude? Little by little, his anger turned into agony.

The round was finished. The Bailiff d'Aulan returned to his rooms:

'Bring Grevin to me,' he said.

He knew that this old servant, on the order of the Marquis who paid him, spied upon his master much more closely than any other guardian.

There was a knock at the door. The sergeant and Grevin were there.

'How much money did M. Pierre-Buffière take with him on leaving?'

'Whatever the Bailiff loaned him.'

'Thank you. That's all.'

The answer pleased and displeased the commander at the same time. It would certainly have been better that this man should be ignorant of this service, which conformed so little to the rules of fortresses, and which he had advised his protégé to keep absolutely secret. At least he had not gone very far in advancing a few crowns for the purchase of *La Vie d'Alexandre* by Quintus-Curtius, and the Bailiff had taken the precaution of making Pierre-

Buffière give his word not to borrow money at La Rochelle. These Mirabeaux were gentlemen.

More knocks at the door. The sergeant entered, still more embarrassed than before.

'What is it?'

'I owe M. the Bailiff the admission that, before leaving, M. le Baron de Pierre-Buffière borrowed my savings from me.'

'You are an imbecile! Get out.'

M. the Bailiff d'Aulan felt sad, and foresaw great misfortunes for the State, the army, the King, Pierre-Buffière, and himself; all the idols that his candid and military soul had worshiped up to this time.

M. the Bailiff d'Aulan laughed to himself. His guest, Pierre-Buffière, had returned for the dinner hour. Since the evening before he had been at Saint-Martin de Ré.

'What, monsieur the governor, could you suspect my punctuality?'

Pierre-Buffière's dignity was humbled, but he pardoned it like the good prince that he was.

The commander nevertheless risked a few reproaches, particularly on the subject of debt.

'What do you expect?' laughed the young man. 'My father refuses to give me board money, but makes himself responsible for my debts. I am not borrowing — I am making him advances.

The Bailiff, whom this kind of reasoning disconcerted, suspected there might be something to reply,

but not knowing what, chose to eat. His guest, during the liqueurs, banished his last scruples when he cried:

'Ah! my dear governor, I owe to you my knowledge of what liberty really is!'

And, rising from the table, he recounted what his life had been up to then: family, college, military service, three aspects of prison.

With tender emotion, the Bailiff thought that he was probably the first commander of a fortress in history to whom such a compliment had been addressed and, there with his feet on the andirons, he felt himself plunging into depths of beatitude.

What had Pierre-Buffière said standing there before him?

It was a dream. These mad words could not have been pronounced. But the young man was really there, smiling and determined, and repeated:

'Yes, my dear governor, it is time for us to leave here.'

'Leave! You mustn't think of such a thing. And where? And how?'

'This way,' said Pierre-Buffière, astride a chair on which he seemed to gallop. 'I bring the news of the continent back to you. An expedition to Corsica is being prepared. I want to go on it. I was born to be a soldier. Besides, I have no choice. One must get ahead these days either by the salon (and the cut of neither my body nor of my mind qualifies me for success there), or by family (and mine will never get me anywhere except into the Bastille), or by one's

own merit (and one cannot prove that inside fortresses except by defending them or blowing them up, which is equally prohibited to you and me, my dear governor). Unfortunately, there are no other enemies on our horizon than M. de Choiseul and the Marquis de Mirabeau, who will never come to hunt us here, where we should find it so agreeable to see them in our place. So we are forced to find some other way. There's going to be a fight. I'm going to fight.'

'Patience.'

The Bailiff said 'patience' as he might have said 'pity.'

'I have no time for patience. I'll be twenty years old in March.'

'Listen, my young friend . . .' M. le Bailiff d'Aulan gathered his wits together, unearthed a plan that he had hatched a long time ago and which seemed magnificent to him. Justice was going to be done him. He would leave the Île de Ré, obtain a position worthy of himself, and immediately call Pierre-Buffière to his side.

'Bravo!' cried the prisoner. 'This plan is fine, but we must turn it around. It is I who should go out first, make myself known, appreciated. I will get into good standing again with my father, and I will use his influence with the Duc de Nivernais to have you placed at last in the place your ability deserves. We shall get along much more quickly.'

The Bailiff was perplexed. Perhaps this young man was right. The Mirabeaux certainly were stronger at court than he.

'But how will you get out of here?'

'Thanks to you. Favor for favor. In exchange for the one which I am going to do you, you write my father a letter in which you tell him all the good that you and I think of young Pierre-Buffière, the happy effect which the open air will have on him, and the necessity of making him prove himself in combat for the honor of the name of Mirabeau. Besides, here is the letter. I have permitted myself to bring you an outline of it.'

And so it was that the Marquis de Mirabeau received from the Bailiff d'Aulan so pathetic a missive that he believed himself obliged to cancel the order of M. de Choiseul and attach Pierre-Buffière to the Legion of Lorraine as a second lieutenant.

The Corsican expedition was prompt and easy. However, the future orator had time to show enough military knowledge and virtues so that eighteen years later the Chevalier de Villereau, major of the Legion of Lorraine, remembered it still and declared that he 'had never known a man with such great talents for the profession of arms as the Comte de Mirabeau, if time had but made him prudent.'

CHAPTER VI

The Vagabond

It was early in May, 1770 — May 13, to be exact. The day was drawing to a close. On the Durance the boatman who had charge of the ferry at Mirabeau manor had just returned to his cottage and, having slept all afternoon in the sun of Provence, at last settled down to sleep in the shade. Suddenly the door was opened by a rough hand. A soldier asked to be taken across the river.

It was too late to cross. Honest men were resting, soldiers had only to do the same. The boatman had nothing to say to this intruder whose uniform and dusty appearance inspired no confidence in him. On the roads there were only too many of these extortioners of the peasants.

However, this soldier called to some one outside. A horse came into the light. A terrible voice commanded obedience — that this man should be taken across immediately. The boatman felt the poor walls of his cottage tremble. He went out and saw a furious officer with uncovered breast. In his fear he believed himself surrounded by troops, and, without saying a word, made his way toward the river and untied the skiff.

Remaining alone, Pierre-Buffière permitted his horse to hunt a bit of grass while he waited.

A great sadness came over him with the evening.

So this was how the land of his ancestors welcomed him the first time that he prepared to set foot upon it. This ferryman was more master of it than he.

The year before, when he had come from La Rochelle to embark at Toulon, he was forbidden by his father's order to cross the boundaries of it. All that he had attained to-day in recompense for the bravery he had shown, which had won him the admiration of his comrades and his chiefs, for this passion for work that he displayed everywhere and that he proved in bringing back from his brief campaign a history of Corsica, was the laconic permission accorded by the Marquis to come 'incognito to kiss the hand of his uncle,' the Bailiff, who had established himself here on his return from Malta.

Incognito. Even the name with which he had been born, the name which accompanies the most miserable, the most criminal of men into the tomb, had been taken from him. Naturally, in order to anticipate their astonishment, he gave out to others that his father wished to follow the example of the great houses whose heads, having become too few for the titles, were obliged to distribute them in order to be able to carry them. But here, where the ground under his feet seemed as much his own as his blood, where the past was his, where the very atmosphere moved him as the perfume of a mistress, found again, at the end of a long absence, the foreign syllables sounded indeed like a sentence of exile.

He raised his eyes toward the high towers of Mirabeau, which commanded the tragic circle of

rocks. They still held the sun at this hour when it seemed no longer to see anything but them on earth.

'Those are mine,' he said aloud.

The château gave the effect of an overthrown Titan. The torn summits, the crumpled masses, the impenetrable ravines where each spring the fire of ancient volcanoes was reawakened, made up a landscape to its measure.

He took pleasure in thinking that his château on the summit governed this catastrophe of nature.

Then despair claimed him again. So it was. Sorrow did not come to him without pride nor pride without sorrow. His soul soared on its wings and then came the fall. But to-day he felt more strongly than ever before that double urge of his being which raised him up or beat him down higher or lower than the rest of men and never left him at their level. The ravages, the contradictions, which already had struck his young life with a sort of curse, seemed to him concentrated at the foot of this château, where he knew himself master and where he presented himself as a beggar.

What was his uncle going to say to the soldier who carried the humble letter in which Pierre-Buffière implored to be received if only for an instant?

When at the age of nineteen, the young officer setting out from college had, in the garrison of Saintes, inaugurated his liberty with gambling debts, with a flight which seemed a little like a desertion, and a promise of marriage to the first trollop

in sight, the indignant Bailiff had tersely advised the Marquis to send such a son to the Dutch colonies from which scarcely any one ever returned.

'We would thus be certain,' he wrote in calculated words on September 10, 1768, 'never to see this unfortunate, born to bring grief to his parents and shame to his race, reappear on the horizon.' Pierre-Buffière had not read the sentence, but had known of its content.

This Bailiff was not, however, a bad man, old sea dog that he was, of numberless campaigns, for at Pierre-Buffière's age he had already had almost nine years of active service. After having narrowly escaped death in four battles, barely recovered from the scurvy in the Azores, acquired kidney trouble in Guadeloupe, broken his left thigh, no doubt to revenge himself for the cannon shot he had received in the right thigh, and finally as a general, commanded the galleys at Malta, he returned to nurse his ills and wounds at Mirabeau. Now he supported, with the rewards of his services, the Marquis, who was almost ruined by his enterprises and his lawsuits. But had he changed his opinion of his nephew during the last two years?

Pierre-Buffière paced the banks of the Durance through the darkness with a restlessness that was stimulated by hunger.

At last the ferry came back with the two men. The soldier said:

'I bring back the letter. M. the Bailiff is at Aix to take care of his leg.'

So it happened that Mirabeau slept that night in a field, like a vagabond without a place to lay his head, at the foot of the six-towered castle, of which, as the eldest child, he was by sacred right the inheritor and the lord.

CHAPTER VII

Family Life

Aix, *May* 15, 1770

YESTERDAY evening, dear brother, I was extremely surprised. A soldier brought me a note from M. Pierre-Buffière, who asked when it would be convenient for me to see him. I sent word that he was to come.

I was delighted to see him. I do not know whether, as the saying is, I have the hearth in my heart, but it swelled at the sight of him. I found his face homely, but not at all bad, and behind his pock-marks and his features, which are greatly changed, he was like the poor dead Comte in his attitude, his gesture, his expression, etc. . . . If he is not worse than Nero, he will be better than Marcus Aurelius, for I don't believe I ever saw so much intellect.

Thus began the letter which the Bailiff wrote the Marquis the day after the Château de Mirabeau had failed to offer Pierre-Buffière either a shelter or a piece of bread.

From this moment the young officer regained his exuberant gayety. He had a friend in his family. His life was entirely transformed.

He said to himself that decidedly bailiffs were easy for him to get along with and that perhaps the time had come when he would at last know kind-

ness. He had searched in vain for the meaning of this word since he was very young, from punishment to punishment, up to the day when he thought he had found it in a little girl of Saintes.

Now, after three years had passed, he remained grateful to this voluptuous and simple child in whose arms he had thought at the time he should like to hide humbly throughout a lifetime! Obvious foolishness, this promise of marriage. In order to make it, he must have felt the soul of his uncle speak within him, of the Comte Louis-Alexandre de Mirabeau, 'the poor dead Comte,' who seemed to live again in him, according to the Bailiff. The Comte had married Mlle. Navarre, less famous as an actress than as a kept woman, before he became grand chamberlain to the Margrave of Bayreuth, and conducted important negotiations between the France of Choiseul and the Prussia of Frederick the Second, and died in 1761 in the arms of his second wife, laden with honors and German florins.

Pierre-Buffière quietly congratulated himself on having been taken away from Saintes and from this misalliance, for left to himself he would not have had the will power to escape. However, before and since this adventure he had had others and had had all the difficulty in the world to prevent a Corsican mistress from following him into France. But in spite of everything, his first love survived alone in his memory and he still sent her secret letters, although his well-beloved had already bid farewell to aristocratic attentions and was prudently preparing

to marry the man she preferred, the archer of the mounted police.

Still stronger than this memory was the thirst for security born at this time in the soul of the young officer. He longed for rest from these liaisons as from his campaign, as from his past follies, in this home peace which his comrades talked of in Corsica around their bivouacs and which he had never until now glimpsed except through their homesickness.

'My leg is getting better,' his uncle said to him one day. 'I hope to return soon to Mirabeau, where I very much wish to see you and where your father ought to come. If I could bring you all together, there, you and him and your sister, the little Cabris, it would give me great pleasure.'

It remained to get the Marquis's permission for this sojourn. Meantime, the return of the prodigal son was surrounded with as much mystery as a guilty rendezvous. The Bailiff had lodged Pierre-Buffière at Aix at the Saint-Louis Gate, in the house of Abbé Castagny, half rustic, half business man, under the vow that his identity should not be revealed to any one at all. He came to walk in the vicinity regularly twice a day and met his nephew as if by chance. Then he drew from his pocket one of his innumerable treatises, which he did not cease, great scribbler that he was, to dedicate to the navy, to commerce, to ports, and to the English. While strolling, the nephew, in his turn, read out loud his history of Corsica. The Bailiff was vaguely restless when he returned from these meetings, but drunk

with admiration. He wrote to the father letters upon letters: 'I say again either he is the greatest bluffer in the universe or he will be the most promising European subject to be Pope, minister, general on land or sea, chancellor, and, perhaps, farmer.'

The Marquis warded off this enthusiasm: 'He's the best man in the world to eat up one's bread and butter,' he replied. Nevertheless he permitted his brother to receive 'the fool' at Mirabeau.

There Pierre-Buffière saw his sister arrive, the Marquise de Cabris, who had found the secret of resembling him and yet being beautiful. Nothing but the teeth marred this fresh visage with its animated black eyes. But she showed them as little as possible, and when one watched her supple walk and her divine figure one saw nothing but a goddess on the verge of growing fat.

Not only did the young man succumb to 'the seductive magic' of the young Marquise, but he was amused by her eloquence, her racing imagination, and her irreligion that she had acquired successively with the Benedictines and then with the Dominicans of Montargis.

When they carried on a discussion, each discovered himself in listening to the other. They found themselves even closer still in both feeling victims of their father. At the end of each day, during which Mirabeau had noted, on the sheets which flowed out of all his pockets, recollections of his uncle about Guadeloupe, Malta, the administration of the navy, and *La Plume*, which, according to the Bailiff, was

responsible for all the ills of France, the nephew and niece relaxed in an abandonment of mutual confidences. He recalled the perpetual scenes of the Marquis, his refusals of money, the Choquard Boarding-School, the Île de Ré, and, above all, the interdiction to use the name of Mirabeau. She described her marriage, the arrival at Bignon November 18, 1769, of a dull young man of nineteen whom she had never seen and who did not even seem to know for whom and why he had come. The ceremony was patched up the next night and the forced departure for Provence took place two days later. She became indignant at her elder sister, the Marquise du Saillant, more favored than she in the marriage contracts, and that violence rang through her remarks which made of her later, according to the Marquis's expression, 'her family's enemy.' Her highly colored language ravished the lieutenant of infantry, who was scarcely out of the camps and had not had time to become used to civilization again.

From confidants they became accomplices. As she was without shame, she left nothing hidden from her brother, neither the distaste she felt for her little defective husband, who came from a family of fools, nor the taste which she was capable of feeling for others, nor the manner in which a Dominican nun, Mme. de Rémigny, had prepared her for all kinds of gallantry in her joyous convent of Montargis. He accepted the good offices she proposed to him in connection with the fair lady of Saintes, to whom she smuggled letters, and in connection with

certain very gay friends of the city of Grasse, where she had already left a pretty trail of scandal at eighteen years of age.

The good uncle, who had 'the virtues of a hero and a saint,' was happy to feel around him the affection of the two young people and believed he had discovered family instinct in his nephew. Not succeeding in bringing the Marquis to Provence, he urged him to call his son to Limousin and to repose his trust in him.

He pleaded so much and so well that one day, in the month of August, Pierre-Buffière descended in the manor of the same name at the Château d'Aigueperse, where his father welcomed him 'with graciousness and even tenderness.'

The Bailiff's praises of Gabriel had aroused in the fertile and disorganized brain of the Friend of Man a tumult of plans. Some concerned the future of his economic system, others that of his house. Having by special divination conceived the necessity of reforming the government and the customs of France, he could not but hold this great enterprise to be the duty of aristocracy with a Mirabeau at its head, his son after him.

This succession was not, moreover, the only one that preoccupied him for the moment. His mother-in-law, Mme. de Vassan, was going to die, and he saw in this event the means of reëstablishing his compromised fortune. Still it was necessary for him to negotiate. His eldest son's intermediation seemed the only one possible.

The Marquis and Marquise de Mirabeau had lived separately for eight years. The agitated wife, whom we met in the first chapter, had not grown calm with age. Not only did she play a great deal and drink quite a little, but her mania to expose her bosom to every comer had led her to worse abandonment. She gave herself to passing soldiers, and even, it seemed, to her coachman. At least she might have made some attempt to cover up these excesses. Unfortunately she felt the need of giving certificates to those with whom she felt especially satisfied. This was, besides, the only act which distinguished her as the mistress of the house. It was dangerous. While she was at her mother's in Limousin, some of these diplomas fell into the hands of her husband. The discovery brought about the rupture: 'I put up with everything,' the Marquis wrote later to the Bailiff, 'until I learned this filth which no honest man should cover with his cloak.'

From this day on he renounced all caution and the use of arbitrary warrants of arrest became familiar to him. He succeeded in having his wife shut up in the Abbaye des Alloix at Limoges. Later, she was forbidden to live at Saint-Junien until after she had signed a compromise by which she bound herself 'to make no visits whatsoever nor to take any trip in the rest of France without having notified her husband and obtained his consent.' Then the family solicitude of the Friend of Man spread to the mother of the Marquise, Mme. de Vassan, whom in her turn he had declared incapable of managing her own

affairs and placed in the Château du Saillant, near Brive, under the daily surveillance of Louise de Cabris's hostile sister, the Marquise du Saillant, and a son-in-law determined to buy with docility toward his father-in-law a chance to inherit in the end from every one. His mother-in-law interdicted, his wife half prisoner, his eldest daughter declared insane and eternally condemned to a convent, his second daughter at his mercy, his eldest son exiled and deprived of his name, his third daughter sent to the devil with a little idiot, the Marquis now had nothing more with which to occupy himself than his second son, sixteen years of age, and congratulated himself on having been a model son-in-law, husband, and father.

'Above all, I have been a family man,' he said.

At length, however, such a series of successes against his own blood made him restless. He foresaw, and was not wrong, that it could very well be followed by a series of lawsuits after the death of the Marquise de Vassan, in view of which members of the family spied on each other from Aigueperse to Saint-Junien and from Saint-Junien to Saillant. Certainly after so much war a little diplomacy would not be unbecoming. Who could negotiate between the Marquise de Mirabeau and her daughter du Saillant? Between the two sisters? Between their relatives? Who, except the eldest son, who was bound to his mother by common exile, intimate with his sister Cabris, and who, after all, appeared the least irreconcilable in this stormy family?

Gabriel quickly guessed, behind the long paternal discourses, the secret of his return to grace. He did not fail to adapt himself to the circumstances, which he understood very well. After having been rejected from the family, he found himself become the arbiter, and entered into this new rôle without a shadow of astonishment.

The presence of his father aroused deep within him the mixed sensations that an animal feels before an obstacle, the thrill at overcoming it, the fear of breaking his bones, and the instinct to examine it. His brain dwelt on the theories of the Friend of Man. His father's severity, however, broke up his enthusiasm. Turn by turn spurred and held in, he finished by developing a 'ceremonial attitude' of which the Marquis complained without understanding that he had imposed it. His son enchanted him and exasperated him. 'But granted,' he wrote the Bailiff, 'that here is another Mirabeau spawned out and lacking employment, that is to say, another very troublesome person, a man with wit first and merit afterwards. . . . What the devil can one do with such sanguine exuberance? Where is the scope large enough for him? The Russian Empress is the only one to whom it would do any good to marry this man.'

In default of Catherine the Second, the young man went in October to get the Marquise de Mirabeau and conduct her to the bedside of his dying grandmother. She received him as if he had been the Marquis himself, with a pistol which she did not

put aside, and she started in with such a stream of imprecations against her husband, her daughter du Saillant, and Gabriel himself, that the latter put up some resistance, invoked attenuating circumstances and talked of conciliation. At this last word the pistol went off. The mother naturally had not aimed at her son, but believed she had killed him, and, throwing herself on a body which happily had lost none of its aplomb, she bathed it in tears. Gabriel opened consoling arms and judged 'that there would never be any stability in that head, but that he would take it upon himself to make her do everything that was wished, from the first step on.'

In fact, he persuaded her to accompany him to Saillant. On the way she retailed to him all her misfortunes, talked of Mme. de Pailly, and of the bastards the Marquis de Mirabeau had had. As the father had told his son everything about the bad conduct of his mother, the son lost between them the little filial respect that had remained with him.

On November 4, 1770, the Marquise de Vassan gave up her interdicted soul to God. But she died avenged of all her inheritors, for she had found time before the interdiction to draw up a perfectly valid will which gave satisfaction to no one.

Gabriel alone triumphed. His father, mother, sisters, brothers-in-law, in disagreement in all ways and on all things, agreed only over him and overwhelmed him with as much praise as they had formerly lavished blame on him. The name of Mirabeau was given back to him. Then he received, besides,

the commission of captain of dragoons in the Legion of Lorraine, which had the advantage of obligating the army toward him and obligating him toward it practically not at all, for he was never obliged to rejoin his command.

It was then that this 'demon for the impossible,' as the father called him, devoted himself, under the inspiration of the Friend of Man, to an enterprise even more astonishing than the reëstablishment of harmony between his relatives. He wished to combine liberalism with the feudal system in the manor of Pierre-Buffière by substituting for the old feudal justice a court of arbitration composed of arbitrators elected in the eight parishes of the barony. The elections were held and were successful. The court solemnly assembled under his presidency, February 10, 1771, in the great hall of the Château d'Aigueperse.

After having presided over these states in miniature, the young Comte de Mirabeau, reëstablished in his name, titles, and privileges, took the road to Versailles to make his entry at court.

CHAPTER VIII

M. le Comte de La Bourrasque

In March the honor of presentation was opened to him.

Mirabeau arrived that morning at Versailles, proud of his mouse-colored velvet costume, of his sky-blue ribbons, and determined to conquer the court, without forgetting Mme. du Barry, to astonish the King by the breadth of his military conceptions, to obtain at least a regiment at the head of which he already saw himself bringing back victories. Three other gentlemen were to be presented at the same time as he. According to the rank of age, he saw he would be the last. The wait was long. He noticed that it was freezing in this palace and that there was nothing on which to sit down, while the crowd of lords and ladies became more dense from moment to moment. All the people were whispering a secret to one another which the newcomer sought vainly to discover.

'Are we at mass?' asked he of his neighbor. Groups turned, scandalized, at the sound of his voice. The Maréchal de Richelieu came up with an obsequious courtesy:

'Let us congratulate ourselves, monsieur,' he whispered, 'that to-day one may speak in a low voice at court. During the time of the late King one did not speak at all.'

'I should have awaited the next reign,' murmured Mirabeau.

The Maréchal smiled and repeated the phrase to twenty persons, always in confidence. People began to look at this insolent unknown with curiosity to which the young man responded with winks and prodigiously familiar nods of the head. But a movement in the crowd announced the entry of Mme. du Barry. Mirabeau stretched his neck in order to watch her approach and saluted her when she was near in what he thought was a very noble manner.

As her only reply the favorite said to her brother, the superintendent, with her most indignant air:

'How good His Majesty is to receive peasants in court now!'

As she went away, Mirabeau suddenly felt heavy, awkward, such as he was in fact, and wished he could return to Limousin.

The Duc de Nivernais, who had seen the incident, thought it necessary to console his friend's son:

'The Comtesse does not know you yet . . .'

'Oh!' said the young man, strangled by his desire for vengeance, 'that will not prevent me devoting to her the book which I am preparing to follow those of my father.'

'And which will be entitled?' amiably asked the Duc.

'*The Lady Friend of Man*, naturally.'

The old courtier, in whom courage was not the chief virtue, sprang back as if he had stepped inadvertently on a tiger's paw.

Finally the King appeared, surrounded by his family and a numerous suite.

His Majesty slowly made a tour of the room in which men and women were pushing one another to obtain a glimpse of him. The moment came for the four candidates to be presented to him. He looked them over one by one from head to foot, as he would have done horses, and went away with a very disgusted air and without saying a word.

Good-bye to speeches, favors, regiments, victories! Mirabeau felt that he lived again through his first days in the Choquard Boarding-School and the taunts of his little schoolmates. But after all, this memory comforted him: he had only to win over the courtiers as he had formerly won his comrades.

So he began entering into the conversations with a voice of authority, and following his caprices as freely as when in the regiment, up to the moment when they were permitted to watch Louis XV dine. Then he mingled with the terrified gentlemen servants, and gliding among them as they were about to taste the King's food, according to custom, he whispered:

'His Majesty is very fortunate, monsieur, to eat your leavings.'

The next morning Mme. de Dufort said to the Marquis de Mirabeau: 'Your son undid the dignity of the whole court, but he has more intelligence than all the rest put together.'

At this the Marquis decided that his son was lost as far as the King was concerned. Accustomed to

the exquisite politeness of the time, he caught meanings at once, and knew better than another the danger of showing too much intelligence. Meanwhile Gabriel gloriously continued to pass three days of the week at Versailles, attending balls, spectacles, and the gambling-tables, where he won a hundred livres one night when M. de Francueil lost five hundred thousand. He learned that the art of living was confounded with that of borrowing; that the Princesse de Guéménée, to whom he was particularly recommended, would have less credit if she did not owe sixty thousand livres to her shoemaker; that M. de Montmorin would have fewer friends if he did not owe one hundred and eighty thousand livres to his tailor; that the Duc de Lauzun would not be Lauzun if he had not debts of two million; and that the King, himself, would cease to be a true king if he should find himself no longer behindhand in paying the baker and butcher.

Before profiting from this excellent education, a thing which was not to be long delayed, the young man rested from Versailles during half of the week, by running about the libraries of Paris during the day with M. Le Franc de Pompignan, whose solemn poetry his father approved, and running after the girls with less pompous companions during the night. One early morning, when he was returning in a cab to the paternal residence in the rue de Vaugirard toward four o'clock, he heard himself hailed near there from the rue Pot-de-Fer.[1] It

[1] At present the rue Bonaparte.

proved to be a lame young seminarist who asked him to stop a minute and lend him the roof of his cab from which he could reach the high wall of Saint Sulpice, over which he had jumped the evening before to meet his little mistress of the rue Féron. This was the first service that Mirabeau performed for Talleyrand.

During this time the Friend of Man wore himself out in useless efforts to find a commander to whom he could attach his son in Flanders, in Corsica, or in Hungary. Each one excused himself with fright at the prospect of having to command such a person as the Marquis presented, according to the day, under the name of M. L'Ouragan, or, more nobly, of M. le Comte de La Bourrasque.[1]

The summer arrived without seeing a realization of either the father's or the son's ambitions. The latter, with good grace, recognized that the air of the provinces was much better than that of the court and returned gayly to Limousin, whence he was drawn during the winter by the insurrection at Mirabeau.

It would have been surprising had the Friend of Man applied the principles in Provence which he had backed in Limousin and thus have had a court of honest men elected. Logic was not his vocation. So he had not hesitated to have recourse to conveniences of the most feudal justice in order to get his hand on the communal goods which had been disputed by the peasants and the lords of Mirabeau

[1] In English, *l'ouragan* is hurricane, *la bourrasque* is caprice.

since the sixteenth century. A true agrarian movement arose in protest against this act. At its head was found, as always, a lawyer, M. Mottet, attorney of Aix.

Mirabeau, taking it upon himself to put an end to this, returned as master, in December, 1771, to the proud château where he had had so much trouble to get himself received as a guest the year before! He was twenty-two years old, the age when one knows no obstacle. He was without advisers, the Bailiff having left Provence to live between Bignon and Paris. He had acquired in Corsica a certain military harshness and at the court all the aristocratic prejudices. From the height of his citadel he watched the country below. He decided to fulfill with a vengeance the order which the Marquis had given him 'to look well into the popular stupidities.' Finally from the point of view of the general interest he believed he was right and perhaps in fact he was, for it was a question of protecting the land from inundations, by saving the trees on the communal land which were being imprudently wasted by the flocks of goats and the extravagant cutting of the villagers. His plan was simple and clear: above all, to make himself understood and, if that was impossible, to make himself feared.

But the time had come when the people of Provence and elsewhere no longer understood masters whom they no longer saw. Their long absence had exhausted even the peasants' fear, for they felt themselves upheld by the complicity of the

Third Estate, master from then on of all useful posts.

Moreover, in Provence the conspiracy against the nobility had found a powerful aid in the Assembly of Communities formed of elected representatives from each provostship. Already parliamentary institutions were gaining strength, smothering the feudal institutions. The Revolution announced itself by universal lawsuits. 'There are not more than six lords in Provence,' wrote the Bailiff of Mirabeau, 'who are not litigating at present with their communities.' When the Comte called the ringleaders of the movement to Mirabeau, they did not come. When he threatened them, they turned their backs without replying. The lieutenant judges, the registrars, the prosecuting attorneys, who held their offices from the lord, abandoned them rather than obey. Communal elections took place at the beginning of 1772 at Mirabeau and the neighboring village of Beaumont. In the two towns, M. Mottet, the chief of the opposition, was elected consul. Mirabeau found no one but the priests to support him, and he held them in horror. He realized his solitude and soon his lack of power. One day, in passing one of his former lieutenant judges named Boyer, who did not even greet him, he knocked the man's hat to the ground. The man put it on again and dared the Comte to do it over. The peasants appeared on their doorsills. Some went to hunt pitchforks. One gesture more and Mirabeau would have unloosed the revolt. M. le Comte de La Bour-

rasque regained his sangfroid and went on. The incident was recounted and enlarged upon everywhere. It was told how Mirabeau had permitted himself to be thrashed.

'One would never have believed,' said the nobles of Aix, 'that a Mirabeau had the blood of a fish in his veins.'

The guilty judge was informed upon, an inquiry started, and witnesses found who confirmed the outrage. Mirabeau, by public declaration, stopped the examination and saved Boyer. He had learned a great deal during these few weeks. He had felt the breath of the people's hate on his face and discovered the fragility of these privileges which no longer were balanced by return services, and the feebleness of châteaux which had become dangerous to villages which they formerly sheltered. From afar, Versailles seemed to him now like a beautiful flag-decked ship, lost on the high seas, where the noise of a festival was dying down around a sleeping pilot, while the storm was gathering which shortly would tear away the masts and scatter the oriflammes to the wind. He wished at least to save the frail skiff which had been confided to him by gathering around him the men of whom he was by birth the natural chief. He acted too late as did all his class. For three years he struggled in his corner of Provence. He tried everything, great public works, festivals, and distribution of grain. He was seized with bursts of generosity, then fits of temper, and, feeling the catastrophe approaching, in the end he abandoned

himself to it, sacrificing to the moment the morrow in which he no longer had faith.

Naturally such presentiments did not prevent him from seeking distractions, of which his impetuous youth had need. He found them sometimes at Aix, sometimes in the beautiful Château de Tourves where Horace de Valbelle gathered together poets, artists, and women and held a true court of love.

The vogue that year was to try to marry Mlle. de Marignane. She passed for the richest heiress in Provence, and her father only wished to get rid of her in order to continue tranquilly reading *Le Mercure* in the company of Mme. de Croze, whom he had found very complaisant. Then too all the nobility of Provence was in the lists; the Marquis de Caumont, M. d'Albertas, son of the first president of Parliament, and M. de Valbelle himself, urged on by his mother, but held back, it is true, by his favorite mistress, Mme. des Roldans, young wife of an eighty-year-old husband. Mme. des Roldans, anxious to ward off the danger, decided to fix up a marriage for Mlle. de Marignane and won Mme. de Croze to the cause of a certain M. de La Valette. This was the same as to win over the father. As to the young girl, no one thought about her. They knew her ready to say 'yes' to any one, for at her grandmother's home, where her father had forgotten her, she was so bored that she did not need all these obstinate suitors to remind her of it. This was the situation when Mirabeau fell into the running.

Life in the provinces was not intended for lone

men. Gabriel had acquired a strong conviction of this during the long evenings in the great hall of Mirabeau. Besides, he felt that man found his liberty by marriage and that there existed no other way for a noble to get rich. These reflections were not very elevating. They brought him to a decision, however.

An original idea came to him, that of seducing the girl. Considering his physique, this might have passed for boasting! But various experiences had reassured him on the question of his ugliness. He was to write later to Sophie de Monnier:

'I used to say, like Duguesclin, who was at least as homely as I: "Never will I be loved nor welcome, always will the ladies put me off, for I know well that I am very ugly and badly made. But since I am very ugly, I must be very bold."' He added: 'I have no longer such fear for myself in life. I have noticed that ladies are so good that the homely have at least as many of them as the handsome.'

On this occasion he showed himself 'very bold' in the fashion of Duguesclin. The seduction of the young girl, the winning over of the grandmother, all this M. le Comte de La Bourrasque accomplished in eight days. He did not take the time to ask himself if Mlle. de Marignane was pretty, in which he did wisely, for she scarcely was. But at least she possessed a charming voice. Music was their bond. He consented to sing in classic French, which he did not like, to please old Mme. de Marignane. The grandmother smiled at the duet which continued

long after the old lady had fallen asleep, for the neighbors on awaking the next morning saw Mirabeau's carriage in the street where it had waited since the evening before.

Things had advanced to this point when Mirabeau received an astonishing letter from his father, enjoining his son to leave Aix immediately, 'upon the failure of which he would be publicly conducted by the mounted police to the Îles Saintes-Marguerite.'

'This is how I am encouraged the first time I perform a reasonable act,' thought Mirabeau.

But he took care not to obey, showed the letter to all those whom it could make indignant, and only hastened events the more. Every one had to yield before this 'hurricane' — M. de La Valette, in spite of his earlier engagement, M. de Grammont, in spite of his beautiful name and beautiful face, the Messieurs de Chabrillant and de Caumont, in spite of their fortunes, the Marquis de Marignane in spite of Mme. de Croze, and the Marquis de Mirabeau, in spite of his fury.

The marriage was celebrated with great pomp on June 23, 1772, at Aix. All those who came to the wedding received presents. The house of Marignane 'did not begin to empty itself for eight days.' On the ninth day Mirabeau drew up his accounts. He had nothing but debts.

This time it was not his father's fault. The latter had given him the Château de Mirabeau and six thousand livres of income, which should have

amounted to eighty-five hundred in five years. He could do no more. But the great heiress did not bring for the moment more than three thousand livres of income, of which it was necessary to pay twenty-four hundred to her grandmother for board.

'I had then,' Mirabeau wrote from Vincennes some years later, 'sixty-six hundred livres to cover the wedding expenses, which it would not have been becoming in me to avoid, to dress myself, my wife, and my household, to pay interest on my debts, to give the customary presents in the communities of Mme. de Marignane, and to live on a year.'

Once he had made this rigorously exact calculation, the new husband drew conclusions. Having nothing on which to live, he had something on which to borrow. If his wife's *dot* was small, their prospects were great, and no one in Provence yet knew to what point the fortune of the Marquis and Marquise de Mirabeau was compromised. Gabriel knew it no better. Rich in hopes, he spent the future. His first attempts at accounting having failed to depress him, he renounced it for good. He courted the Jews and left their houses only to give orders to artists, to libraries, to contractors, and to buy gowns and jewels for his wife, to order twenty thousand livres' worth of carved woodwork, and to cut avenues through the rock. Feminine dress, furniture, architecture, roads, all these aroused his enthusiasm, all ruined him. During this time the Comtesse de Mirabeau wrote coyly to her father-in-law: 'We are running after order and hope to catch up with it.'

Without doubt they ran too fast, for it was folly they reached. When, in the month of October, 1773, a son was born to them whom they baptized Victor after the Friend of Man, they owed one hundred and fifty thousand livres.

The last sounds of the *Te Deum* sung in the church of Bignon on the occasion of this birth were scarcely hushed, when the Marquis, enlightened by letters from M. de Marignane, began another kind of music and returned to his favorite *leit-motif:* the warrant of imprisonment without trial.

In the month of December, 1773, Mirabeau was condemned to remain in his castle by order of the King: an ingenious proceeding which offered the advantage, if not of settling the Comte's debts, at least of sheltering him from their consequences, for once 'under the hand of the King,' he escaped from arrest for debt. But in March, 1774, the Château de Mirabeau was closed to him by an order of exile to Manosque, a small village near by. Finally in June the blow fell which he, rightly, found 'terrible.' An ordinance, given out on the unanimous advice of a family council by the civil judge of Chatelet in Paris, ranked him forever among those declared incapable of managing their own affairs, an interdict.

In life one evil leads to another. The month before, Mirabeau had just undergone a sorrow of another sort. M. de Gassaud, a handsome musketeer, one of Mirabeau's friends naturally, had been at the home of his parents where the exiles happened to be lodging. He had wooed the Comtesse de Mirabeau

and she had given herself into his arms as quickly and as far as possible. Then the young man returned to his garrison with a light heart and Mme. de Mirabeau left a love letter lying about.

When, one morning in the little house at Manosque, the Comtesse saw her husband bearing down on her with the blood gone to his head, madness in his eyes, and this letter in his hand, she believed that she was going to die. The idea of braving it out never came to her for a second. She threw herself at his feet, cringed, begged for pity, for pardon, reminded him of their child, denied her lover, showed herself so complete a coward, went through such a long supplication, swore so vehemently that she had not done it on purpose, that Mirabeau felt himself suddenly feeble before so much feebleness. He postponed his decision for several days, as he did in moments when he was afraid of himself, and asked the advice of the only woman in whom he had found a sentiment resembling maternal tenderness, the Comtesse de Vence. This woman reasoned with him gently, according to the best principles of the eighteenth century.

That has happened,' said she, 'which happens to three women out of every four. They differ from Mme. de Mirabeau only in being more prudent, but I recognize that it is frightful for you to have the proof and not be able to hide from yourself what so many others pretend not to know. This last misfortune was reserved for you, but realize that you are only working to augment it if you bring about

the unhappiness of your wife. See in her only your son's mother who will use every moment of her life to make you forget her fault. I do not pretend to diminish its importance. But meanwhile I pray you reflect a bit on how prejudice has developed inequality between the husband and the wife and how unnatural it is that what is permitted to the man should be so rigorously punished in the woman, who often does no more than follow the example which her husband has set her.'

These counsels, which lacked neither subtlety nor allusions, were received with a calmer mind. Mme. de Mirabeau had called to her aid their hosts, the father and mother of her lover. In his defense before the House of Parliament at Aix in 1783, Mirabeau recounted the scene: 'His father [M. de Gassaud] asked me on his knees for the life of his son. His mother bathed my hands in tears. I almost died of shame to see gray heads at my feet. I granted pardon. I pardoned unreservedly and forever.'

In his clemency, he went even to that excess which was in him the ransom of greatness. The parents of the musketeer feared a rupture in the marriage which they had long dreamed of for their son with the daughter of the Marquis des Tourrettes and Mirabeau promised them to intercede. While he sent the Comtesse to Bignon with the mission of restoring him to grace with his family, he himself found it well to leave Manosque in spite of royal prohibition in order to plead and win the cause of the man who had deceived him.

His bad luck saw to it that the Château des Tourrettes should be near Grasse. After having succeeded in his surprising negotiations, why should he not stop an instant in the little Trianon which the Marquise de Cabris had just built in Grasse? He was there on the fourth of August. At this moment his dangerous sister was at war with the whole town. The malicious fool who still served her for a husband had dared, some months before, the infamous joke of having obscene poetry he had written posted on all the walls one night. It contained lightly veiled allusions to the exact or supposed habits of each of the society women. One, only, had been forgotten in this almanac of defamation, Louise de Cabris. So extraordinary an omission had denounced the author who now found himself under the lash of criminal examination.

Of course, all Grasse looked upon Mme. de Cabris as the accomplice of her husband and organized against her a cabal directed by M. de Villeneuve-Mouans. Louise de Cabris left her brother in ignorance neither of this story nor of her resentment. Then she proposed to take him to the home of a very complaisant friend who lived two leagues away among the olive trees in the Pavilion des Indes, Mme. de La Tour-Roumoules. Mirabeau resisted such temptations badly.

The next day after dinner, while the young Comte was enjoying the sweetness of life in the sun beside Mme. de La Tour and her daughter, and, while Mme. de Cabris was listening to the gallantries of

her gentleman escort, an officer of the Royal-Roussillon, M. de Briançon, M. de Villeneuve happened to pass. They pointed him out to Mirabeau, who ran after him, joined him, insulted him, seized the parasol that he was carrying, and broke it on his back. A scuffle, blows. The two men fell, Mirabeau on top. To the accompaniment of Louise de Cabris's laugh, her enemy received a magisterial thrashing, from which the arrival of his peasants finally saved him.

That day was to cost Mirabeau dearly. M. de Villeneuve-Mouans was no sooner on his feet than he went to depose a plaint of attempt at assassination against the aggressor and his accomplices, which complaint glaringly revealed the disobedience to the order of exile on August 27, 1774. Mirabeau became the object of a writ of arrest. To screen him from justice, there was no other resource than 'imprisonment by arbitrary warrant before the writ of arrest should be carried to the notice of the ministers.'

This was, at least, the opinion of the Marquis de Mirabeau, who had become an expert in this matter.

When the commanding officer of the mounted police came to Manosque to arrest Mirabeau, he found him finishing his *Essai sur le despotisme.*

The heavy doors of the Château d'If closed December 20, 1774, on a young man of twenty-five years, of fine name and fine talent, who, after having triumphed over all the great lords of his age with the

rich Mlle. de Marignane, found himself two years later with his château, his fortune, and his wife lost, in the depths of a prison, interdicted and accused of assassination.

CHAPTER IX

Sophie de Monnier

WHAT can one do in a fortress except reflect? Mirabeau reflected. Without doubt he had been wrong to borrow so much from every one and to take too much revenge on M. de Villeneuve-Mouans. But then why was the art of debts, so appreciated at court, so difficult in the provinces, and since when had a gentleman replied to blows by resorting to law? Aristocratic elegance was being lost.

Our captive could very well resign himself to the decline of bad customs in themselves on condition that he should glimpse a way of escape from the Château d'If. Alas! He saw scarcely any. If he escaped from the effects of the royal warrant of imprisonment, the prison for debts was waiting for him on one hand and the writ of arrest from the Parliament of Aix on the other hand.

His father alone could save him by concluding an arrangement with his creditors, which was the duty of a trustee after an interdiction, and by employing the family influence to obtain a withdrawal of M. de Villeneuve's complaint. The Comtesse de Mirabeau had been hurried to Bignon for no other reason than to win over the Marquis to taking these steps.

But the nymph Echo had shown a contrary nature with the young Comtesse. Hearing no more good said of her husband, the wife had quickly

ceased to think it of him. She felt herself at last sheltered from the eternal storm at Mirabeau, and, not liking scenes, she wished to remain here. Her mission appeared to her sufficiently fulfilled when the Duc de La Vrillière had obtained from M. de Joannis, attorney-general at Aix, the suspension of the prosecution, though it would be renewed two years later.

As to the question of debts, she easily trusted that to her father-in-law, who wished to maintain his son on his good behavior by leaving them also suspended. In order better to persuade her, the Friend of Man read to her, on October 11, a letter to the Marquis de Marignane, in which he revealed his programme in these truly paternal terms:

'Gabriel is where he should be and where he shall remain. If a miracle should happen, and he should control himself well enough so that in the end the commander should guarantee his discretion and his repentance, then I will have him sent to some citadel where he will have to live with some one to prove himself. And if, by another miracle, he should pass this trial, I will hold other trials ready, and thus by degrees.'

The young woman listened with a shiver, imagining her future, tête-à-tête with a betrayed husband from citadel to citadel across the years. Her father-in-law having proposed in the mean time to take her to Paris, she replied with the most enthusiastic 'yes' of her life.

One can imagine with what heart she then re-

ceived the letters in which her husband invited her to come and share his captivity. Love must have heroism to make a prison into a home. Émilie de Marignane had never been heroic and was not at all in love any more.

Having Mirabeau at a distance assured respite equally to his father and to his wife. They leagued together to prolong it.

Mirabeau on his rock felt himself consumed with loneliness and suffered. Some days he sought consolation in contempt: 'Spin out your opprobrium where you wish,' he wrote to the Comtesse. '... Farewell forever.' But a memory, a bit of news, an image, reopened his wound. While they kept him shut up behind the walls of the Château d'If, all the musketeers of France were hurrying toward Paris, called to the coronation of Louis XVI, and among them his rival, M. de Gassaud. The lovers would find each other again. This vision made Mirabeau's solitude feverish. He could not keep himself from writing still, to menace and even more to entreat:

'Since you do not believe you are able to come back to Provence, a return which would make you worthy forever of my gratitude, my tenderness, my esteem, and my confidence, then enter a convent and never go out of it.

'I conjure you by your son, by yourself whom I have always loved, whom I love still.... My hand trembles in writing these lines.... I know what happens to my head when I am angry and that is why I allow it little sway; but you, do you not know

my heart? Show me now that you have not sought to abuse me by vain self-deceptions, and that you wish to deserve oblivion for your fault, and reconquer all, even my respect. . . . When will I be able to call you my Émilie again?'

These cries, these plaints, these outbursts of a tenderness which asked only to be rekindled, seemed intensely boring to the Comtesse de Mirabeau. She lied in her letter of response like a little boarding-school girl: 'We have seen the nephew of the Chevalier de Gassaud, but twice, under the pretext that he has been ill, so he says.' Mirabeau could hope for nothing more from this heart.

That she to whom he had given the most of himself, who had had her part in his debts and profited from his follies, had begun to betray him at the moment of exile and succeeded at the moment of imprisonment — there was in this more ingratitude than one can bear at twenty-five. Now that his wife had gone over to the enemy, that is to say, to his father, destiny shut in on him. All chance of liberty vanished. He seemed condemned to turn in circles around these ramparts which were surrounded, as if to redouble the torment of the prisoners, with the near movement of Marseilles and the passing of ships whose sails never ceased to brush past the island which they never touched.

But while his family joined together against Mirabeau, his jailers interceded for him. He was of those who, when they appear in a circle, divide it into two camps and can arouse only enthusiasts and

enemies. His principal partisans at the Château d'If were the governor and the canteen woman. The first admired him. The other loved him, a little because he was a Comte, and still more because he was gay, for he was and he remained so, in spite of everything.

What power there was in this fundamental gayety, invincible, revived even by misfortune! It must either conquer or scandalize. M. d'Alègre, the governor, came to warm himself at its flame as M. the Bailiff d'Aulan had done, on the Île de Ré. Sometimes at the recital of the adventures of his captive, tears rolled down the face of the old soldier, and sometimes he broke into a loud laugh. When he listened he controlled neither his emotion nor his relief. But indignation was the strongest sentiment in this military soul. Should one have asked him which was the guilty of these Mirabeaux, he would quickly have indicated the Marquis. As to the Comte, had he forfeited his honor? For with what could one reproach him, unless that he had seen too largely and that he possessed shoulders, like Samson's, which could throw over the columns of the temple?

The good governor did not stop writing to the Marquis de Mirabeau and to M. de Rochechouart, Lieutenant-General of Provence, to ask them for the liberation of the 'father of a family' whom they had confided to him.

The canteen woman conspired with all her soul. The kitchen, love, and correspondence disputed her

moments. She slipped letters from Mirabeau to his mother, to the Marquise de Cabris, and to Briançon, into the gaiters of men who were going to the mainland and who could not resist her smile. But the new flavor of the food revealed to the canteen man his misfortune, of which he avenged himself by so roughly drubbing the poor woman that she fled to Briançon, not without having taken the precaution to carry with her the savings of the household. Drunk for vengeance, the canteen man unveiled the adventure to the Comtesse de Mirabeau in whom he thought to find a companion in misfortune.

Between the testimonies of good conduct from the governor and the denunciations from the canteen man, the father was disturbed. The letter from the canteen man incited him above all to withdraw his son from the Château d'If in order to send him farther from Grasse and his terrible sister, the one person whom the Marquis feared. He must avoid having Gabriel-Honoré become the center of a family faction insurgent to his authority. The hour had rung for the second part of the gracious programme which the Friend of Man had drawn up: 'In the end, should the commander guarantee his discretion and his repentance, then I will have him sent to some citadel.'

The citadel chosen was the Fort de Joux, to which the commanding officer took Mirabeau on May 25, 1775.

The site of this 'nest of owls,' where springtime was sadder than winter in Provence, at first chilled

the young man. But the commander of the Fort de Joux and of the town of Pontarlier, M. de Saint-Mauris, welcomed him as a guest:

'I know of no prisoners here, monsieur, and less still of a jailer, for the representative of the King on the frontier cannot degrade himself to this trade. So I ask of you only your word to return each evening to this slightly austere dwelling place, where yesterday there was only one gentleman and where from now on there will be two.'

So Mirabeau found himself half at liberty. He could go as far as Switzerland, return to Pontarlier, buy books, go hunting. He searched, as everywhere, for a subject for study. At the Château d'If he had begun a *Traité de mythologie;* here it was a *Mémoire sur les salines de Franche-Comté.* Moreover, he found himself forced to sell the *Essai sur le despotisme* to a Swiss bookdealer, for his father had reduced him to twelve hundred livres a year.

These cares did not prevent him from making visits and going to the balls.

M. de Saint-Mauris was no longer invited without him. The commander was proud of his guest, vaunted him and invited people to dinner to show him off. Ambitious to please, in spite of his sixty years, the young wife of the former first honorary president of the court of accounts of Dôle, M. de Saint-Mauris placed Mirabeau next her at the table during a ceremonial dinner he gave in honor of the coronation of Louis XVI. This imprudence was to cost the peace of the commander, of the president,

of Mirabeau, of Sophie de Monnier and of their families and to trouble the country from Pontarlier to Dijon.

Sophie was tired of old men. Her father was M. de Ruffey, president of the chamber of accounts of Dijon, friend of Voltaire and of President de Brosses. This 'very gallant man,' according to de Brosses, 'full of understanding, loving poetry with passion, even his own,' after having almost given his daughter at sixteen years of age to Buffon to console him for the loss of his wife, had definitely married her to this other widower, M. de Monnier, no less a sexagenarian, but rich, miserly, full of bitterness, and devout.

Families easily imagine that difference of fortune compensates for difference in age. Rich husbands permit themselves to be persuaded of this sufficiently long. The poor young wives are generally the first to see through the illusion. It was already several months since this moment had arrived for the Marquise de Monnier, when, three years after her marriage, she met Mirabeau.

She was twenty years old and had the greatest desire to be in love. Up to that time she had not known how to begin. Deceived the first time by a captain of infantry, M. de Sandoncq, with whom she had become vaguely infatuated while playing Voltaire's *Zaïre* with him, she had just been more bitterly deceived by a captain of artillery, M. de Montperreux, the sort of rascal who terrorized her and got money out of her.

SOPHIE DE MONNIER

It was not the captain of dragoons that she saw in Mirabeau. From the moment he opened his mouth she knew no longer whether he was beautiful or ugly. Does one know whether life is beautiful or ugly? It carries you away with it, and at the hour when it leaves you, it takes the horizon with it. Sophie de Monnier gave herself up to the glorious voice of Mirabeau, fearing the instant when he would grow silent and abandon her to the colorless remarks and the monotonous days that she had endured a long time without suffering. She was ignorant then of that transport by which at each instant some beings leap clear of the earth on which others crawl along, give the lie to the ordinary course of thought, reveal country beside which others have passed without seeing, draw from your soul the secret that you do not yourself know, and communicate to you, as by contagion, the fever to surpass yourself in sorrow or in joy, no matter which. Mirabeau, with his enthusiastic, hot, multiple words which resembled those of no one else, had revealed to Sophie de Monnier this unknown world. She remained in it, astonished, dazzled, disarmed.

For himself, he had begun by finding this great lady commonplace enough, with her timid air, her head eternally inclined over her right shoulder, and her left eyelid decorated with a very obvious mole. He saw her large, black eyes without lashes and bordered with red, her shapeless nose, her large, thick mouth which stammered a little in talking. But suddenly he noticed the expression with which

she listened to him. The eyes had become beautiful, the mouth avid. The commonplaceness was turned into sweetness and the timidity seemed that of a slave. He saw himself reflected in this woman as in a mirror which returned his image to him ennobled. The joy of conquest lifted him. He discovered the freshness of the skin, the pure form of the arms, and, seeking in himself the scar that Mme. de Mirabeau's treachery had left, he found it no longer. He returned to Fort de Joux transformed, brimming with confidence, in love with the future.

The next day was taken up in connection with festivals given at Pontarlier in honor of the coronation, which were to bring favors from on high down on M. de Saint-Mauris. The day after next, his duty accomplished, Mirabeau hurried to Pontarlier, rue des Trois-Sols. The Marquise had just left the Château de Nans, where the former first president of Dôle was accustomed to spend the summer. Mirabeau, at this news, felt himself more lonely than ever.

July came to an end. August and September passed. The memory of Sophie became vague. It would have been entirely effaced had it not been for the care taken by M. de Saint-Mauris to reawaken it. Through comparing himself to the old magistrate, the old officer came to believe himself certain of carrying off the heart of the young woman.

'Think,' he related to Mirabeau, 'that he did not even marry her from love, but for vengeance, in order to have a pretext to disinherit his daughter,

who was in love with a musketeer, Le Bœuf de Valdahon. That was a little girl who knew very well what she wanted, I assure you. Her parents watched her so closely that, when she was nineteen years old, her mother still slept in the same alcove as she. One night the old Marquise was awakened by sighs. She sat up in bed and beheld the musketeer in the bed at her side. There was nothing more to do but marry these children. But a magistrate likes lawsuits, so the father had the lover charged with rape by seduction. The boy was condemned, the little girl shut up in a convent. Six years passed. The girl, having reached her majority, came out and demanded her musketeer. A new lawsuit. The affair went even to the Parliament of Metz, where Mlle. de Monnier had the opposition of her father overruled. The Marquise, having died in the mean time, the furious old Monnier decided to disinherit his daughter by marrying at the same time as she and a woman even younger than she. Three months later he married little Sophie de Ruffey, whose seventeen years deserved better, don't you think? These gentlemen of the long robe understand nothing about love.'

Insensible to the strain of professional jealousy running through it, Mirabeau made use of this story and thought, as he confessed later at Vincennes, 'Perhaps I am as ugly as this commander, but I am forty or forty-five years younger.'

Meanwhile the thought of Mme. de Monnier did not absorb him at all. He was very intimately con-

nected with the King's attorney, M. Michaud, at the bailiwick of Pontarlier, and this intimacy 'spread rather far in the family,' for the magistrate had a sister who became acquainted agreeably and easily. For the rest, the young man did not attach much importance to Jeanneton Michaud and asked only to sow the wild oats of his resentment there as he sought liberty and a few bribes of fortune.

He wrote continually to his father, to his mother, and to his uncle the Bailiff: 'Believe me, there are men whom it is necessary to keep busy, and I am one of them. That activity which can accomplish everything and without which one can do nothing, is becoming turbulent in me and can become dangerous, since it has neither object nor occupation.' (August 22, 1777.)

No response came. The Bailiff strove in vain to convince his brother: 'Be careful; people insist on believing you a little hard toward your own; this son, in the eyes of the public, appears guilty of debts only . . . and if one shut up all the young men in debt, one would see only graybeards in the streets.' (April 23, 1775.) The Friend of Man remained intractable. He was too much afraid of seeing his son come to the aid of his mother, who was also demanding her fortune and liberty at the same time. The Marquis's letters to the Bailiff in May, 1776, divulge the secret of his savage resistance: 'This wicked and villainous female has succeeded in forwarding a letter to her son, although he is under civil and

royal impeachment for crime. But what can be done about it? It is impossible to unmarry one's self, or to do away with one's paternity; and when the woman is in the Salpetrière [1] and the son at the foot of the scaffold, they will not for all that be debaptized. You can see well that I am interested in having the imprisonment continue, for fear that Gabriel should return here to second his mother.'

Despairing of men, Mirabeau made a new attempt in regard to his wife, proposing to her to flee with him to a foreign country. It was, of all his steps, the most presumptuous. Émilie de Marignane was tasting at this moment the sweetness of widowhood without mourning. It did not occur to her for a moment to renounce it and endure subjection, exile, and poverty. She also replied with 'an icy refusal' at the end of the month.

It was the middle of October. Some days later the residence of the Monniers was reopened at Pontarlier. November found Mirabeau installed as a friend of the household. Thus had the husband naturally wished it. The former first president of the chamber of accounts of Dôle no longer loved anything but whist and conversation. These pleasures, which he had in common with his colleague, the president of the chamber of accounts of Dijon and founder of the Academy of Dijon, M. de Ruffey, had been worth as much to him as Sophie. Since his marriage he found scarcely any one but priests to satisfy these desires. Mirabeau's imagination, eru-

[1] An asylum for old women and insane females in Paris.

dition, originality renewed them. At the age of M. de Monnier it is rare to discover a new diversion and particularly bitter to renounce it.

Sophie herself did not know how to dissemble. Scarcely had she found herself alone with Mirabeau before she questioned him about Mlle. Michaud. When a woman talks to a man about his mistress, it is in the hope of being preferred to her. The Comte did not fail to reply that this child served him as a pastime and that he did not love her. 'The most satisfying proof that I can give you of it,' he hurried to add, 'is that I love another.'

Five minutes afterward Mme. de Monnier knew whom. As if she were awaiting this declaration, she replied: 'My age and circumstances might inspire hope in you, but I am going to talk to you with as much truth as simplicity in order to banish it.'

And upon this she recounted all her history, from Buffon up to M. de Montperreux. Mirabeau, being twenty-six years old, was not of the age of a confidant. To tell about one's self to him, was already to give a little of one's self. And when, in order not to give herself completely, Sophie objected in the end: 'You will soon be free. You will leave Pontarlier, you will return to the women of the great city, and, besides, ambition always makes a man like you forget love,' how could he fail to understand: 'I have called you all summer, and I tremble to-day not at the thought of belonging to you, but at the thought of losing you.'

He had understood it, in fact, and a new feeling

suddenly stopped him: the fear of love. His instinct warned him that some day, when he had permitted this constraint to knot itself about him, it would be so fervent and so strong that he would not be able to untie it, would remain shut up in it as in a living prison, and that the burden of this life chained to his would weigh down his destiny for a long time. He left, went into Switzerland, thought to give himself a respite. But the temptation was too strong. What young man could resist it? At this time, when all outlets to happiness seemed shut, here was one which opened, the only one. It showed him a young woman of twenty-one years who was desired by all and who wished only him. Why fly, at an hour when the unexpected vision of felicity appeared?

Mirabeau soon returned to Pontarlier, and the struggle began between the bashfulness of the woman and the passion of the man, the struggle in which the stages are always the same. Sophie invoked Rousseau, copied pages from *La Nouvelle Héloïse* to convince her lover:

'The charms which arise from a union of hearts join for us with those of innocence; no fear, no shame will trouble our happiness; in the midst of the true pleasures of friendship we can speak of virtue without blushing.'

'I was only occupied with my desires and you, only with defending yourself,' Mirabeau wrote to her later, in recalling this period of their love. But a day came when Sophie gave him her lips. From then on she was conquered. Before possessing her,

Mirabeau persuaded her: 'Every honest woman who has said to a man: "I love you," and kissed him, owes him all favors. . . . Virtue resembles even as little what it is ordinarily called as it does vice. It has nothing in common with that exigency, monastic and contrary to nature, vulgarly called continence.' Sophie had need of these reasonings, for her senses had not yet spoken. She yielded finally to the words rather than to the kisses of her lover: 'No matter how eloquent were my kisses, they did not persuade you.' On December 13 she fell. Mirabeau, in his letters from the dungeon of Vincennes, was to recall this day: 'Your head leaned on my arms . . . your beautiful throat, your bosom of alabaster . . . given over to my burning desires; my hand, my happy hand dares wander there; I break through the fearful ramparts with which you have always kept me away so carefully . . . your beautiful eyes close . . . you palpitate, you shiver . . . *Sophie . . . do I dare? Oh, my darling, do you want to make me happy?* You do not reply. . . . You hide your face in my breast. . . . You are drunk with voluptuousness, you are tormented with bashfulness. . . . My desires consume me; I expire. . . . I am reborn. . . . I lift you up in my arms. . . . Useless efforts. . . . The floor reveals itself at my feet. . . . I devour your charms and cannot enjoy them . . .'

Theirs was not a peaceful voluptuousness. Mirabeau must less than any other have known the calms of existence.

The time for making New Year calls approached.

Pontarlier, in 1776, received as a New Year's gift a subject of conversation. There had been long years since the city had found so much at which to laugh and at which to be indignant. The visible drunkenness of the Marquise de Monnier, the touching joy of her old husband, the nonplussed look of the commander of the town and of the Fort de Joux, made a fool of by his prisoner: what incentives for anecdotes! 'How would this turn out? Impossible that M. de Saint-Mauris should not take vengeance for his humiliation? What pretext would he find?'

It was better than a pretext: a reason. In fact orders arrived from Paris to have inquiry made concerning the author of a certain *Essai sur le despotisme*, which had just appeared in Switzerland and insulted the monarchy, overwhelmed it with citations borrowed from the Greeks, from the Romans, from the French, and predicted with a somber eloquence: 'O Kings, you who grow old in a long childhood, you whom weakness rather than desire leads to tyranny, tremble as your self-interest, your most dear idol, opens your eyes and awakens in you prudent fear and frightful remorse. Hands of fanaticism will reach out for the most cherished of princes and those most worthy of being. . . .'

The Mirabeau of Revolutionary days announced himself in this essay that he was finishing at Manosque as the commanding officers found him to conduct him to the Château d'If. He had profited by the neighborhood of Switzerland to sell it to a bookshop in Neuchâtel. If the affair should be discov-

ered, M. de Saint-Mauris would be accused of having guarded his prisoner very badly. In the mean time a money order for fifteen hundred livres fell into the hands of the governor. It was signed by Mirabeau and in the name of the editor, and stipulated that the money agreed upon was in exchange for the *Essai sur le despotisme.* Here was the proof. At the idea that, after having ruined his hopes in love, Mirabeau had risked ruining his career in the bargain, the old officer could control himself no longer. Mirabeau's last happy evening at Pontarlier was that of Twelfth Night. The favor, the Twelfth Night king, fell to him when the cake was cut. He chose Sophie for queen and the old Marquis de Monnier, transported, promised to give a ball on January 14 to celebrate the accession of this double royalty. M. de Saint-Mauris was present for this triumph. On January 10 he had Mirabeau called, handed him the intercepted money order, and intimated that he must return to the Fort de Joux and stay there.

The young man pleaded, prayed, stormed. In vain. All that he could obtain was a respite of four days and the supreme permission to attend the ball given in his honor.

At the expiration of this delay, he had disappeared.

CHAPTER X

An Adventure Story

THEN began an extraordinary story of adventure.

Mirabeau had not fled far upon leaving the ball. He had simply glided into Mme. de Monnier's apartments.

At the least noise he had to hide himself among the dresses in the depths of a dark closet near by. The duty of sentinel had fallen to the traditional accomplice of adulterers, the chambermaid. Everything went well for two days. On the third, the servant warned them that M. le Comte ate too much and that the pantry suspected his presence.

So the Comte packed himself off by night. For a month he lived in Pontarlier, changing domiciles, and returning to his mistress sometimes by a known route when every one was asleep. But February 16 the Marquis's servants, awakened by a noise, believed they had found a thief and fell upon him. Mirabeau tried first to escape; but finding the door shut, he faced them and asked to be conducted before the master of the house.

There he retailed an astonishing improvisation, upheld by a letter from his father which was no less improvised, and finished by convincing M. de Monnier that, in coming from Berne on his way to Paris, he could not pass through Pontarlier without thanking him again, and that he had hid from the servants

only to avoid compromising a former Magistrate.

This was a beautiful success in oratory. It was only the next morning that M. de Monnier, awakened from his dreams, bethought himself of some improbabilities. He asked questions. The replies confirmed his suspicions. At once he resolved to organize a defense, called out the household, forbade any one to run errands for his wife and ordered them to keep a good guard in the future against all intruders by night and by day. The chambermaid hurried away to tell her mistress of this.

Love had transformed Sophie de Monnier. She had shed her resignation. This woman, who had been gentle and, until now a little sluggish, felt herself full of audacity. The alarm of the evening before had convinced her that Pontarlier was no longer a safe place and that it was necessary to leave as soon as possible. She sought a means. The orders given by M. de Monnier offered one.

So she entered her husband's room, like an outraged queen:

'You suspect me and dare not even tell me. You confide in your valets. Am I under their guardianship or yours? If you had asked explanations from me, I should have furnished them all to you. If you had given me your orders, unjust as they might have been, I should have obeyed. But I do not want to put myself at the service of your domestics. It is because I am poor that I am proud. I like the convent better than your house, because here I am humiliated. They have told you, no doubt, that I have a

lover and that he is hidden in this city. Very well, send me to another, return me to my parents. You do not doubt my mother nor her principles. I wish to place myself under her protection. I am returning to Dijon. Have me conducted there.'

The old man no longer recognized his wife. He believed himself guilty, acquiesced in all she wished. On Friday, February 23, Sophie left for Dijon. On Wednesday, February 28, Mirabeau arrived there.

He found a note from Sophie notifying him that she would go to the theater that evening with her mother and her friend, Mme. de Saint-Belin, before going to a ball given by the provost-marshal of Bourgogne. She recommended the most extreme caution, for Mme. de Ruffey's principles were not spoken of in vain. In fact, after having sent a priest as a messenger to meet their daughter along the highway and advise her to turn back to Pontarlier immediately, the de Ruffeys had shown themselves exceedingly discontented with her disobedience and since then the father, the mother, the sisters, the brothers, and the brothers-in-law watched her in relays.'

But 'M. l'Ouragan' was unchained. He counted besides on Mme. de Saint-Belin as an accomplice, having taken refuge at the home of her lover after leaving Pontarlier. As to Mme. de Ruffey, if she had heard him talked of too much, she had never seen him.

Mirabeau was the first person into whom Sophie bumped upon entering the playhouse. She blushed,

paled, believed she was going to faint, and had all the trouble in the world to reach her seat. The Marquise de Ruffey noticed that she was disturbed and threw suspicious glances in all directions. Mme. de Saint-Belin made a sign to be careful. The act finished without the Comte being able to join Sophie. Between the acts the three women vanished. This exasperated Mirabeau.

An hour later this glittering name echoed from the threshold of the provost-marshal's salons:

'M. the Marquis de Lancefoudras.' [1]

The escaped prisoner, defying royal orders and pursued by the mounted police, had found this discreet fashion of making his entrance into the home of the chief of all the mounted police of Bourgogne.

Dijonais curiosity was soon aroused at the appearance of this unknown. Mme. de Ruffey did not lose him from sight an instant. The moment the false Lancefoudras asked Mme. de Saint-Belin for a quadrille, the mother hesitated no longer and went out abruptly, leading the two young women.

Thursday morning Mirabeau was still asleep when the door opened and an officer entered.

'The provost-marshal wants to see you immediately and has charged me to accompany you to him.'

Grievous awakening, which did not foretell a pleasant day!

'Well, M. le Comte de Mirabeau, did you enjoy yourself at my house last evening?'

Seated at his desk before large sheets of white

[1] Hurler of thunderbolts.

paper, M. de Montherot, the provost-marshal, thus questioned the young man who, this time, was somewhat disconcerted.

'I was preparing to thank you for having given us back the charming Mme. de Monnier just at the moment when I noticed that you were putting her to flight,' continued the mocking voice.

Mirabeau looked at M. de Montherot, saw his eyes wrinkled with laughter, and breathed freely. The provost-marshal exhaled Burgundian mirth. In spite of his functions, he could not take seriously the stories of women and the misadventures of the long-robed gentlemen. Much better: he found pleasure in them, and could not hide it. Mirabeau, who understood quickly, profited immediately by showing the extremities to which they had driven him, recounted his captivities, his love affairs, cited the letter that he actually had written on January 15 to the Minister of War asking to go again into service, and finally invoked the solidarity which ought to bind them as true gentlemen together. M. de Montherot found him charming, asked for his word of honor not to run away, and authorized him to remain in his furnished room until the arrival of orders from the Ministry. He said to him, in conducting him to the door very gallantly:

'It is true good fortune for you and for me, monsieur, that the secretary of the King's House should to-day be called M. de Malesherbes and should be a notorious adversary of arbitrary warrants of imprisonment. In the time of M. le Duc de

La Vrillière, my good offices could not have done anything for you.'

Sophie, who was awaiting the issue of this interview in mortal anxiety, broke into laughter on learning of Mirabeau's success and showed herself more than ever determined to remain in Dijon. Mme. de Ruffey, indignant, no longer left her daughter except at night. Even then it was only to trust her to her oldest daughter, a severe canoness who made Sophie sleep in her room and attached one end of a ribbon to her sister's foot and the other end to her own arm, in order to be warned by the least suspicious movement. This lasted fourteen days. The younger pulled the ribbon so often that the canoness, tired of being awakened with a jump, yielded at length to her desire to sleep tranquilly and on the evening of March 14th had herself relieved by Mme. de Saint-Belin. The latter had not shut her eyes before Sophie bounded out of her bed and ran to meet her lover at the public ball of the Perspective. She did not return until dawn, showing no regard for the consternation of her pious family.

During this time a rain of petitions was showered on M. de Malesherbes, caught between the Marquise de Mirabeau, M. de Montherot, and M. Michaud, attorney at Pontarlier, who pleaded for Mirabeau, and the Marquis de Mirabeau, the Marquis de Marignane, M. de Valbelle, the Duc de Nivernais, and M. de Saint-Mauris, who demanded an almost limitless incarceration.

On March 21, the order arrived to shut the Comte

up in the Château of Dijon. At this news, Sophie finally consented to return to Pontarlier whence it seemed to her easier to escape. She was escorted there by the formidable canoness. As to Mirabeau, he waited without too much impatience for the commission, named by M. de Malesherbes to pronounce on the usefulness of arbitrary warrants, to come to a definite decision.

The decision was not known until the end of April. The commission recommended ten months of detention at the Château de Pierre-Encise, near Lyon, 'a length of time,' it said, 'which seemed sufficient to satisfy the different motives of this prolongation, which, if further extended, would hurt the Comte de Mirabeau's advancement in the service.'

But had not the Friend of Man learned in the mean time that his daughter Cabris had just arrived in Lyon? He imagined his children reunited and the idea filled him with horror. New steps were taken, supported again by the Duc de Nivernais, Minister of State. The father succeeded in having a change made from Lyon to Doullens. After which M. de Malesherbes fell, for the epoch had come when ministers died young.

This fall took every hope from Mirabeau and pushed him to extreme resolutions.

Up to this time he had hesitated to follow the passionate advice of Mme. de Monnier, who dreamed of running away and burying herself with him in oblivion in a foreign country. He was ambitious, and each morning found him awaiting the great

event which would permit him to reveal himself to his country. They could persecute him, they could not defeat him. If he exiled himself, he would renounce all that his name promised him, the fortune that he believed was his, and the talent that he knew was his; he would justify his enemies, lose credit in public opinion, and make himself incapable of any career in France. Had not Sophie de Monnier said to him, 'You have another future than love'?

But the transfer to Doullens, the disappearance of the guarantees that the liberalism of M. des Malesherbes offered, was this not a closed future? Did this not mean the triumph of paternal authority in league with royal authority to prepare imprisonments without trial eternally and to drag this rebel son from fortress to fortress? Among all these voices repulsing or condemning him was this woman's voice which called. How could he refuse to listen to the only one which was gentle?

The die was cast. He would run away and Sophie with him. Now it was for Mme. de Cabris to direct the operations.

The fears that the Marquis de Mirabeau had felt in seeing his daughter abandon her half-demented husband and go to establish herself at Lyon with her Briançon and one of her girl friends, Mlle. de La Tour, were not without foundation. Mme. de Cabris had the temperament of a gang leader. Her brother and Sophie de Monnier had kept her posted on their love as well as their projects and she encouraged them vigorously both in one and the other.

During this spring of 1776 she communicated with Mirabeau by the agency of a gendarme of the guard, expelled from his corps, who was called the Chevalier de Mâcon, and with Sophie by means of a contraband peddler named Jeanret.

The Chevalier de Mâcon helped Mirabeau escape from the Château of Dijon, on May 25, on a horse loaned by Mme. de Saint-Belin's brother. They passed the frontier by night and arrived at Verrières in Switzerland, three leagues from Pontarlier, to wait for Sophie, who was to be conducted there by Jeanret, he being familiar with the roads across the border. But the canoness kept watch and Sophie was caught at the moment when she was escaping on May 29, caught again June 2, and taken back each time to her husband in whose home a brother, the President de Vesvrottes, had installed himself with his hand on his gun to lend aid to the canoness. During three months there was nothing but blocked efforts and struggles in cunning and speed between the band of the Marquise de Cabris and the royal or private police. The Chevalier de Mâcon was obliged to flee into Italy, as 'an order from the King arrived to seize him, no matter where.' Jeanret, in his turn, under the threat of a writ of arrest, had to hide himself. Mme. de Cabris became impatient. She wrote to Sophie on July 29, in her imperative tone: 'I believe that you will do very well to hurry, do you understand me?'

M. de Ruffey, who was in Paris, asked help of the authorities against the abductor of his daughter.

The Minister Amelot signed a warrant on June 4 which provided for the imprisonment of Mirabeau on Mont-Saint-Michel. The Marquis de Mirabeau, himself, who was no longer checked by Malesherbes, took Muron, the inspector of police, into his service, 'the only person in Europe for this sort of thing.' Muron set out with Bruguières, also of the police, in pursuit of the fugitive. Their mishaps tore cries of fury from the father: 'I hear that he is in Savoy, but the scoundrel moves every day. He knows the secret of throwing these lazy and rascally blood-hounds off his trail, and he will ravish the world with his detestable talents.' (July 11, 1776.)

It is true that sometimes accompanied by Briançon, sometimes abandoned by Briançon, sometimes fighting with Briançon, Mirabeau crossed and re-crossed the frontier from Geneva to Thonon, and from Thonon to Geneva, slipped from Switzerland to Lyon and from Lyon to Provence. He had the cleverness to make the police believe that he had embarked for England, and while they were searching for him in Nice and in Villefranche, he climbed back by the counties of Nice and Turin, the great Saint Bernard and the Valais, to Verrières, where he arrived on Friday, August 23.

The next day Sophie joined him at half-past eleven in the evening. She had fled in men's clothes on horseback during the hour when the servants were assembled with M. de Monnier for prayer.

Fifteen days passed without the lovers coming out of the room where Mme. Bolle lodged them. Then,

by Berne, Soleure, and Basle, they reached Rotterdam on September 26. Some days later, at Amsterdam, Calvestrand, in the house of the French tailor Le Quesne, a M. and Mme. Saint-Mathieu installed themselves. The lovers believed themselves saved. There remained for them to find a means of livelihood.

Cautious writers who believe themselves to be moralists have advanced the theory that Mirabeau had a pecuniary interest in this love affair. The theory is unsustainable. It is true that Mme. de Monnier left with her jewels, that she took twelve thousands livres from M. de Monnier, pretending and believing, with the facility of feminine ethics, to be taking them back on her *dot*. It is also true that an important part of this money remained in the hands of Mme. de Cabris and of Briançon. But Mirabeau could not hide from himself, and in fact did not hide in any way the responsibility which he assumed in carrying off a young woman, in renouncing the resources that he received from his family, slight as they were, and in trying to found a home in a foreign country without any income.

He had chosen Holland as his place of exile, for it then served French booksellers as a refuge from the censorship, and it was with them that he hoped to find sufficiently remunerative work.

Upon arriving in Amsterdam, he offered them his services, taking advantage upon presenting himself of the success that the *Essai sur le despotisme* had brought him, though this was somewhat imprudent.

He found scarcely anything but translations to do, to which he put himself courageously, and led with his companion the narrow, sedentary life of a very well-behaved employee. He had no relaxations other than music and love. Sophie economized and gave lessons in Italian. At the end of a few months, Mirabeau succeeded in making a louis a day. He was proud of it and glimpsed the moment ahead when he would be able to pay the debts contracted during the first week. All that was necessary was to write a few articles and success would come. *Un avis aux Hessois et aux autres peuples de l'Allemagne vendus par leurs princes à l'Angleterre* provoked a wave of opinion and aroused polemics to which he replied.

The Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel had in fact just sold by treaty six thousand Hessians to England to go to fight the American insurgents. Mirabeau invited these sold-out populations to revolt: 'What! Why should you not imitate these courageous people, instead of destroying them? They are breaking their chains; they are fighting to defend their natural rights and to guarantee their liberty; they are stretching their arms out to you. They are your brothers.'

In this Holland, beaten by the winds of all the emigrations, where all the currents of European thought crossed, and which appeared to be a sort of estuary of Europe, Mirabeau's mind acquired that scope which those people lack always who remain shut in by their native horizon. It came to him to

conceive a true internationale from which princes only would be excluded and of which the voting sections would engage themselves to collaborate in 'abolishing as far as they were able' in all countries, 'the servitude of peasants, the enslavement of men to the soil, the rights of mortmain, . . . forced labor, . . . trades companies, special privileges, . . . constrains placed on industry and commerce by customs duties, and by excise duties, . . . ecclesiastical jurisdiction,' and in instituting the freedom of the press and religious tolerance. 'Provided that a man be useful to the State, what does his belief matter to the legislature?' Such was the subject of his *Mémoire concernant une association intime à établir dans l'ordre des F. M. pour le ramener à ses vrais principes, et le faire tendre véritablement au bien de l'humanité.* In this were not found the insistent cries for revolution of the *Essai sur le despotisme* and *Un avis aux Hessois,* but rather the actual lines for a plan of revolution.

Free Mason since his early youth, the emigrated Mirabeau sought in a reformed and enlarged Masonic propaganda, the détour which would permit him to return into political action and to take his revenge for exile. Thus he worked, almost in spite of himself, by the impulsion of his nature, to break the precarious peace which sheltered his love. Likewise he intervened in the lawsuit between his father and mother, drew up a *Sommaire* to help the latter, and published a pamphlet against the Friend of Man entitled: *Anecdote à ajouter au nombreux recueil des*

hypocrisies philosophiques. This did not prevent him from writing a burlesque story in verse at the same time, *Parapilla*, and a work on musical criticism, *Le lecteur y mettra le titre*, of which M. Louis Barthou, expert in this field, has said: 'Outside of Rousseau, there is no one to my knowledge who, at the end of the eighteenth century, wrote on music with more force and art than Mirabeau.'

Of all the ambitions which such mental versatility and such fecundity in work permitted 'M. de Saint-Mathieu,' the most difficult to realize was certainly that of passing unnoticed. Then, too, the French police had discovered Mirabeau's and Sophie de Monnier's retreat quickly enough. M. de Monnier knew it so well that he had sent a confidential servant named Lesage to his wife, to offer her pardon and money on condition that she would abandon Mirabeau. She had refused it all, and M. de Monnier had brought suit against the lovers for rape by seduction and adultery. This was vigorously conducted, since, on May 10, 1772, a judgment rendered by default condemned the Comte de Mirabeau, convicted of the crime of rape by seduction, to have his head cut off and the Marquise de Monnier, convicted of the crime of adultery, to be shut up the rest of her life in a house of refuge in Besançon, 'there to be shaved and clothed like the inmates.'

Already Mirabeau and Sophie had been unable to rest for several days. They had been notified of the arrival in Amsterdam of a policeman named de Bruguières, who had accompanied the inspector

Muron on the fruitless chase conducted the preceding summer on the heels of Mirabeau.

Mirabeau went to the house where he knew he would find the policeman and tried to provoke him. The man slipped out of it cleverly, and, being the bearer of a letter from M. de Vergennes, Minister of Foreign Affairs, secretly negotiated for the extradition of Mirabeau with the help of the Duc de La Vauguyon, Ambassador from France to the States General of Holland. Mirabeau believed himself to be protected by his recently acquired status of bourgeois of Amsterdam. On the thirteenth, however, the States accorded the authorization of the arrest.

Bruguières presented himself on the fourteenth in the house on the ruelle Sainte-Lucie, where M. and Mme. Saint-Mathieu lived. Mirabeau, warned, had just gone out. Sophie was going to escape by another route. She was arrested and tried to poison herself. Mirabeau returned on his tracks and gave himself up. He succeeded in having Sophie relinquish the dose of opium she kept for suicide. Eleven days passed in formalities. To hurry matters up, the Duc de La Vauguyon paid the couple's debts, which amounted to ninety-six hundred livres, and intervened to avoid having the Marquise de Monnier sent to the prison of Sainte-Pélagie, with which she was menaced. On the twenty-eighth, the lovers left Amsterdam under escort. June 7, 1777, Mme. de Monnier, three months pregnant, was placed in a sort of house of correction kept by Mlle. Douay,

under orders from the police. Mirabeau was shut up in the dungeon of Vincennes.

May 20, the Marquise de Mirabeau had been arrested and conducted to the convent for women in Saint-Michel by virtue of an arbitrary warrant accorded to the Marquis de Mirabeau. Her demand for separation had been rejected several days before her arrest.

On June 20, a new arbitrary warrant exiled the Marquise de Cabris from Paris, where she had come to lend her aid to her mother.

The Friend of Man triumphed.

Some months later he met a friend whom he had not seen for twenty years, M. de Montpeyet, who, inquiring with that cordial indifference of those who have forgotten almost everything, asked him:

'Your lawsuit with Mme. la Marquise, is it finished?'

'I won it.'

'And where is she?'

'In a convent.'

'And monsieur your son, where is he?'

'In a convent.'

'And madame your daughter of Provence?'

'In a convent.'

'Then you have undertaken to fill up the convents?'

'Yes, monsieur, and if you were my son, you would already have been in one a long time.'

CHAPTER XI

Forty-Two Months of Prison

SIXTEEN months later, this same Marquis de Mirabeau, so proud of having imprisoned all his family, wrote to his brother the Bailiff:

'After having stood up under everything, I believed in my strength. But God wished to undeceive me. I was not able to keep myself from asking Him, with more sobs than I have ever yielded to before in all my life, either to judge me immediately or to give me another conscience which would make clear to me the offenses by which I had merited an unexampled accumulation of misfortunes. . . . After having fought off a bitter feeling of self-pity for a long time, I now fall into one still more cruel, that of self-contempt.' The death of his grandson, Victor de Mirabeau, on October 8, 1778, at five years of age, had provoked in this 'Neo-Roman,' as he called himself, a sudden crisis of feebleness, of anguish, and perhaps of remorse. How vain from now on was his constant vow 'to elevate a family of Provence to the dignity of a family of France'! To what avail had so much ferocity been spent for the honor of a name which fate was wiping out?

If, instead of contributing to the separation of the husband and wife, the old man had in those days united them, if, instead of dissuading the Marquis de Marignane at the time when he had offered to

advance sixty thousand livres to his son-in-law for payment of debts which could, according to the Bailiff's accounts, have been settled for seventy thousand livres at the most, had encouraged this generosity, would he now have had to mourn the end of his family? Would not other grandchildren have made a crown for his old age? And the poor little dead child himself, would he not have been saved?

For a long time anonymous letters had warned the Marquis 'not to leave that child in a country where he was the only barrier to the great hopes of men who were indeed of bad reputation.' The Comtesse de Mirabeau, even, felt such fears for her son that she almost never let him out of her sight. After the death of the child, the mother's first impulse was to suspect one of her relatives, Mlle. de Gras, of having poisoned him in order to inherit the Marignane fortune. Some weeks later, she went to Mirabeau, felt herself so ill upon entering that she declared to the Bailiff that she could no longer bear up, and asked to return to her husband's family. The only thing which stopped the project was the death of the Comte de Valbelle, which occurred at this time, for the Marquis de Marignane, accustomed to living in the midst of the court of love of which Valbelle was king, begged his daughter not to leave him alone.

However, the move of the Comtesse had awakened in the Bailiff's mind the idea of reuniting Mirabeau and his wife:

'Now would you not think,' he wrote to his brother on November 26, 'that one could whisper to this

young woman that she can no longer live in your home without being reconciled with her husband? As for him, you know how pitiable it is in that country; it seems that one would scarcely have to go out of one's way to put through the affair. What if he did carry off a woman? It was a folly of youth, pardonable at his age, for you know the ethics of Babylon.'

The Marquis resisted, but the idea insinuated itself little by little into his mind.

In April, some months before, Mirabeau himself from the depths of his prison had felt the need of exacting some news of his child from the Comtesse: 'Your son is my son, madame. It is possible that he will never know his father, but do you not owe to this father some report?' This just complaint of a man whose firmness seemed only increased by misfortune was lost in the indifference and oblivion which met all his powerless outcries. Who worried about the prisoner now? Not even his mother. He had lived for sixteen months in a ten-foot-square universe, beneath a skylight which did not begin to pour down its little light until the sun was setting; barefooted, covered with rags, in solitary confinement, he developed hematuria and felt his life decline from day to day, became dead to the world, more dead to his family, for the single crime of having committed public adultery in a society which made a rule of confidential adultery.

'I loved my son, monsieur; therefore I was sure to lose him,' he wrote in a short letter to his father on

November 16, 1778. 'This is almost my crowning misfortune. But every evil has a definite ending; it is that moment when the evil becomes intolerable. So I must resign myself to be patient until then.'

However, he still clung to existence, as he himself added, because of his love for Sophie, who was shut up the same day as himself in a dormitory in the rue de Charonne with whores, mad women, and bedbugs. She was transported with the other inmates toward the end of 1777 to the citadel of La Nouvelle France, where she gave birth to a daughter, Sophie-Gabrielle, on January 7, 1778. The child was immediately put out to nurse at Deuil, near Montmorency.

The two lovers who were pursued, repudiated, and condemned by their families won pity from the police. Not having found clemency among those who ought to have been their natural supports, they had inspired it among their jailers. Inspector de Bruguières occupied himself with keeping the Marquise de Monnier from prison. The Lieutenant-General of Police, M. Lenoir, had authorized Sophie and Mirabeau to write to each other and took charge himself of their correspondence — to check up on it, it is true.

All their life found refuge in these letters which they wrote continually, in which she breathed out her desperate and monotonous tenderness, in which he revealed without reserve, and sometimes without shame, an eloquence impassioned at the same time by love, anger, grief, and desire.

'We are too wretched,' she lamented. 'Gabriel, I feel that you will not hold up. . . . Never alone, hearing only the cries of mad women and the noise of their chains, knowing that your fate is frightful, trembling for your life, afraid of the effect of everything on you, being reassured very little in regard to our child, ill as I am, it is only your love, only mine, only a remainder of doubt and hope which sustains my defeated heart. . . . I weep continually. . . .'

'What attachment have I in the world other than that of my love? I have neither friends nor parents,' he wrote. 'Oh, my darling, I owe everything to you. . . . Sometimes I listen in silence to that voice which speaks to me, calls to me, cries to me: "She is lost to you; here is your last dwelling place, and you will see her no more." Then I am ready to strike myself. Sometimes love, by a delicious though deceitful illusion, distracts me, melts me with tenderness, consoles me, persuades me to hope. . . . What is certain, and I will tell M. Lenoir, is that I will not give my father the pleasure of seeing me go mad, and get myself thus shut up in a house of correction for the rest of my days.'

To escape this insanity, peril of his solitude, he occupied his mind without rest, devoured the few books in the prison, learned Greek, English, and Italian, mingled with his love letters dissertations on philosophy, ethics, hygiene, recommendations of all sorts on the subject of his daughter, and disordered recollections from his readings. He did not rest from writing to Sophie except to draw up memoranda to

the Friend of Man and against the Friend of Man and addresses to the Ministers and to the King; nor abandon his enormous correspondence except to do translations of Tacitus, Boccaccio, John the Second, and Tibullus; nor his translations except to write tragedies, nor his tragedies but for short stories, nor his short stories but for a history of Philip the Second, nor his historical work but for an *Essai sur l'inoculation*, nor his medical writing but for military treatises. He only renounced tactics to give himself to the criticism of Latin elegy, elegy only for erotic compositions, and his libidinous sport only for a vengeful article entitled *Lettres et les prisons d'État*, in the course of which he cited nine hundred authors. His cell, into which only the turnkeys entered, was thus peopled with an immense world which his imagination brought to life and governed. Throughout his repeated attacks of renal colic, in spite of the overuse of his eyes by constant reading in the darkness, notwithstanding the phantoms which disturbed his short naps, his indomitable energy regained liberty for him and his conqueror's temperament mastered his prison. The solitude, far from defeating him, revealed him to himself. Moreover, what disdain grew in him for this society where fathers sacrificed their sons to their egoism, as sovereigns did their subjects; where the scandal of family despotism prolonged that of royal despotism; and where the Marquis de Mirabeau, in the arms of Mme. de Pailly, judged, branded, and condemned the Comte de Mirabeau in the arms of Mme. de Monnier! And what were these

rules of ethics worth, by which one pretended to establish the equality of temperaments, as if these did not differ as much as mentalities, and as if it was not as much prohibited to a crowd of weaklings to measure the force of desire as it was to a crowd of sots to measure that of genius?

Certainly, he who called himself 'an athlete in love' suffered more than any other from monasticism. Thus the lewdness, which some of his letters give evidence of, is explained, as also two evil little books which escaped from Vincennes: *Ma Conversion* and *Erotika Biblion.*

And why did they not know how to use this abundance in nature which was both his torment and his pride?

At the end of one year, June 18, 1778, Mme. de Monnier was transferred from La Nouvelle France to the convent of Saintes-Claires de Gien where she registered under the name of Marquise de Malleroy. Besides, after the death of the young Victor de Mirabeau, the Lieutenant of Police Lenoir applied himself to ameliorating the father's prison life as much as he could. He charged the chief secret agent Boucher to watch over the prisoner, who must have acquitted his mission with sufficient solicitude to have merited the title of 'good angel' in the correspondence of the lovers.

In the month of March, Mirabeau at last, after nine months, received his trunks from Amsterdam which the Marquis de Mirabeau had had the impudence to claim to the great indignation of the

police. They arrived empty of clothing, but full of books. It seemed to the captive that he had found his best companions again. 'I would think myself richer to be naked in the midst of a library than to be covered with gold and master of all the shops of the Indies, without books,' he wrote to M. Lenoir in thanking him. A little later he was authorized to supplement the six hundred livres that his father gave him annually for his support by selling his works to the book dealers. Thus he could buy more books and receive a publication named *L'Esprit des journaux*, and so keep himself once more 'up on the affairs of the world.' His walks became longer. He was permitted to remain in the interior galleries of the dungeon. He began to sing again. One day a voice replied to him. It was that of Mme. de Ruault, sister-in-law of the commander of the citadel.

Then, when he was in his twenty-third month of imprisonment, in May, 1779, he received a visit in his cell from Dupont, the economist, recently the right arm of Turgot, who was later to be known under the name of Dupont de Nemours. Friend of both the father and son, Dupont had undertaken to reconcile them, a thing in keeping with his Romanesque nature.

When, after embracing each other, the two men began to talk, Mirabeau was stupefied to discover that he had lost his ease of elocution. Nearly two years of silence had chained the alert tongue which formerly had been so agile and so sure. Dupont was skillful. He spoke of Mme. de Monnier only with

respect and reproached Mirabeau only for having fled from the Fort de Joux and for having written against his father. Then he entered into the heart of his subject; pointed out that Émilie de Mirabeau, in order to frustrate the suspected cousin, Mlle. de Gras, in the matter of the heritage, might very well come to it by the only means she had, that is to say, 'by enabling herself to have children'; that if Mirabeau wished to write to his wife . . . He did not fail to add that the Marquis 'burned to have a grandson,' and could not unfortunately count on the youngest of the family for this gift. 'The reason D.D. gives for it,' Mirabeau wrote to Sophie in recounting this interview to her, 'will amuse you. It is that he is a much worse subject than myself.'

When the prisoner, reciting the obstacles which prevented him from returning to the conjugal fireside, enumerated the list of his duties toward Sophie as numbers 1, 2, 3, etc., Dupont contented himself with replying:

'It is necessary to have your liberty for reasons, numbers 1, 2, 3, etc. . . .'

After which the friendly visitor evoked the necessity of perpetuating the name of Mirabeau. To which the prisoner replied, this time very clearly:

'To hell with the name . . .'

'Very well. For myself, I don't scoff at it. After all, if Mme. de Mirabeau has private faults, you have public ones. . . . Soon she will be the only one who can get you out of here.'

This visit, prepared with such wise diplomacy,

was to mark the beginning of interminable negotiations between Mirabeau, his father, his wife, his sister, his uncle, his friend, his mistress, and the Ministry.

In Sophie's tender soul two fears surpassed all others: that of letting her lover die at Vincennes, and that of seeing him leave for the war in America to which he had begged the Ministers to send him. Anything was better, even a conciliation, which she imagined to be a passing thing, with Émilie de Marignane. Day by day she resigned herself to it a little more.

The negotiators desired one thing more: the return of the Marquise de Monnier to her old husband at Pontarlier. But that was too much. She judged this proposition 'absurd and dangerous as well as indecent.'

She added that M. de Monnier was working on a tract against her, of which she had proof, and concluded, showing a sharp enough sense of observation: 'Besides, once wound up to making his plea and writing memoirs, he will not want to change his plan for anything in the world.' To tell the truth, her daughter began to occupy her even more than her lover. She wrote letter upon letter imploring to have her near her and occupied herself with her will so as to leave her as much as possible of her fortune. Vain foresight. Mirabeau was to see neither of his children again. His third year of prison was almost over when Sophie-Gabrielle died in convulsions, May 23, 1780.

The blow was even harder for Mirabeau than the death of his son. This child, born to the only living being whom he loved and by whom he felt himself loved, seemed to have such need of him! She had been the subject of such mutual endearments. He had dreamed so much of her education, strange as were his conceptions on this subject. He found strength, however, in his desire to console the mother, to cradle her sorrow, to save her from that impulse which, each day of her grief, brought her back to the idea of suicide.

Sophie drew similar courage from her love. In pitying each other, each of them thought a little less of his own unhappiness. But the effort that they made broke some of the bonds which joined them without their noticing it. At times they mistook their mutual devotion for indifference toward the little dead child. Between two lovers, who have not seen each other for three years, a tomb creates fewer duties than a cradle.

This death did away with an obstacle in the opinion of many of Mirabeau's friends who interested themselves in his future, and in the eyes of the Marquis and the Bailiff, who wished to see him come back to his wife. They gently persuaded the prisoner to see in it a warning of fate. Day by day the desire for liberty spoke more loudly in him. He wished to live. 'Dear heart,' Sophie wrote to him in July, 'I am grieved that you suffer so from your desires. . . . G. . . . [that is, Dupont] feared, what I believe, that one of the reasons for your impatience is founded

upon that, and I admit to you that it would be hard for me to see you pass your most beautiful moments in the arms of others, if love were not my assurance that I should find you again.'

Her resignation began. Mirabeau, himself, finished by submitting to all the steps that Dupont asked of him. He wrote and wrote again to his wife, to the Marquis de Marignane, to the Bailiff, to the Marquis, to every one. July, August, September, October passed again. Mirabeau was suffocating. He feared he was going blind, ceased to believe in his deliverance, and wished only to be moved from the dungeon to the Château de Vincennes, where the prisoners were better treated. 'What have I asked, what do I still ask?' he wrote to his sister du Saillant on October 19. '*A larger prison* . . . as for me, I repeat it and I swear it to you, I am impatient on only one subject, that is, the saving of my eyes . . .'

Meanwhile the Marquis de Mirabeau felt the urge to free his son for fear he would be freed without his permission. Through his precious friend the Duc de Nivernais, he had asked for a new arbitrary warrant against Briançon, who had come to intrigue in Paris in favor of Mme. de Cabris, and he had brought upon the Duc a scene with the Prime Minister, Maurepas, who was, however, his brother-in-law:

'Here are sixty warrants or mandates for the family of Mirabeau! There will have to be a Secretary of State especially for them! If all those who live by intrigue were to be chased from Paris, grass

CAMILLE DESMOULINS AT THE ROYAL PALACE, VERSAILLES, JULY 12, 1789
From an old print

would grow on the streets. The father takes me for his secretary. Is it not shameful to see no end to the scandals in this family? The King doesn't want to hear any more of it.'

On top of this the Marquise de Mirabeau from the depths of the Saint-Michel Convent, where she had remained shut up, recommenced her lawsuit. His eldest son was the only person the father knew who could calm this madwoman. So he solicited and obtained, thanks this time to the influence of Mme. de Pailly, a new arbitrary warrant of a special kind authorizing him to fix the residence of his son himself. Having, in addition, procured a promise from the latter that he would work for an understanding with the mother and would renounce the name of Mirabeau, no longer for that of Pierre-Buffière, but for that, still more simple, of 'Monsieur Honoré,' he sent his son-in-law du Saillant accompanied by Dupont de Nemours to get him on December 13, 1780. Forty-two months had passed since Mirabeau had entered the dungeon of Vincennes.

When he knew himself free at last, they had to hold him up to keep him from falling. They took him to buy clothes, 'for he was naked as a worm,' the Marquis wrote to the Bailiff. Then his brother-in-law conducted him to the home of the Duc de Nivernais whom he had to thank. 'He managed the affair nobly, and with an air of patronage,' the Marquis again reported. In the evening he slept at the home of the 'good angel' Boucher. The next morning he paid a visit to the du Saillants in the

residence on the rue de Seine which then was owned by the Marquis de Mirabeau. Before the portrait of his father, who did not yet desire to see him, the tears he had held back for four years freed themselves. 'My eyes,' he recounted some days later tc his sister, 'covered themselves with a mist, my head turned, and I was forced to seek, and quickly, an armchair, with such a confusion of ideas as the sight of the world crumbling at my feet would not have aroused in me.'

CHAPTER XII

From One Court to Another

At dusk on Tuesday, May 29, 1781, as the sister who attended to the turning-box in the convent of Saintes-Claires de Gien had, according to her custom, just assured herself that all the outlets were well closed and had shut herself in her room, a soul in peace, a shadow detached itself from a pillar of the cloister, glided to the little gate of the vegetable garden, and with precaution introduced a false key into the lock. An instant afterwards, Edmé Grenou, known as Lafleur, gardener for the nuns, was on the road to Chévenières and going toward the near-by pavilion of Dr. Ysabeau, surgeon for the convent. He had a package under his arm. He went into the garden and knocked at the door. The doctor came and opened it, took the package, returned into the small room adjoining, and said to Mirabeau, who had just ridden from Paris at full speed:

'Here, M. le Comte, are some clogs made of pieces of cloth by Mme. la Marquise de Monnier so that no one will hear you. You have only to put them on. It is time to go.'

The three men again took the road in the darkness that Lafleur had followed.

'Monsieur will please pay attention,' said the latter. 'There are steps to descend just behind the door.'

Mirabeau entered the convent and felt his heart beat faster. The silhouette of a sister had just appeared. She approached.

'Follow me,' she said, 'I am Sister Victoire.' This name reassured him. He knew that she was in the plot!

He crossed the garden, glimpsed vaguely the arches of the cloister, climbed a little snail-like staircase behind the sister, and found himself in a lighted room. Sophie, very straight and very pale, was before him.

'At last!' she said. 'It is four years now that I have waited for you.'

He did not recognize her immediately. She had grown stout. Her hair was graying. The beautiful vision that he had carried of her seemed suddenly to have faded.

She, on her side, found him larger and taller, for by an extraordinary phenomenon, he had in fact grown taller in his prison. She was ashamed to be afraid as before an unknown monster.

Mirabeau's eyes took in the room. They were held by the enormous cupboard which Mme. de Monnier had had made several months before in order to hide her lover in it in case of surprise.

'There's my lodging,' he smiled. 'I am going to believe myself still at Pontarlier.'

At this memory Sophie melted in tears. Mirabeau came to her, tried to console her, called her, 'My darling, my wife,' and 'poor, dear Fanfan,' as in other days. But the sound of these words aston-

ished him now, and his beloved no longer recognized his voice. They both felt that in calling up the past they had just measured the distance which separated them from those days when they had mingled their souls and their bodies. They knew that absence, sorrow, misery, and the years of convent and of prison had given them back to each other as strangers, and that if it were necessary to recommence their life in common, they would no longer have the strength.

Four nights and four days, shut up in this room, they sought each other, believed sometimes they had refound one another, and then lost each other again and clashed on small subjects which revealed to them the impossibility of mutual understanding from then on. The monotony of the life at Gien and the conversation of the nuns and of the priests had, from day to day, reduced the field of Mme. de Monnier's thoughts, while the long meditation, the immense readings of Mirabeau, had enlarged even more the scope of his horizon. Their domains no longer touched. Moreover, Sophie's lover had begun to discover that he was bored, when, June 2, Dr. Ysabeau entered, under the pretext of making a visit to his client, and warned them that Dupont de Nemours had just arrived and was not at all deceived as to the reasons for Mirabeau's flight nor as to the place where he was. The rumor of another elopement was beginning to circulate. The Marquis du Saillant was on the way here. The secret agent Boucher had sent out policemen in pursuit of the Comte.

Sophie began to tremble; saw her lover arrested again and reincarcerated at Vincennes for no one knew how many years. She begged him to fly. He asked nothing better. Outside he breathed freely. His great passion was ended.

Alone, Sophie understood. She wept again.

'Grant that I do not become a mother again,' she prayed.

Mirabeau's letters came at longer intervals, then ceased.

'They all think,' she wrote to him, 'that we cannot live without each other. Alas, my mate, how wrong they are in that!'

Mirabeau — pardon me, M. Honoré, as they called him — no longer listened to anything but the call of life. He thirsted for liberty, for all the liberties. He again took possession of Paris, of its women, of its adventures, of its streets, of its assemblies, and of its passions which the disgrace of Necker and the ruling of the Comte de Ségur, exacting four degrees of nobility of any one who wished to be an officer in the army, had just awakened on this second fortnight in May, 1781.

Destiny had delivered him from all his chains at the precise moment when spirits that had been raised to indignation by the accession of Louis XVI fell from the great heights to which Turgot's reforms and Necker's promises had carried them.

Maurepas, 'the old parrot of the Regency,' as the Bailiff of Mirabeau called him, after having been Minister around about his twentieth year had be-

come Minister again in his seventy-fourth, without other claim to an office in the government of France than having written a song against Mme. de Pompadour for which he had been exiled from Versailles about 1750. He pushed the art of betraying his colleagues up to virtuosity, used Necker to ruin Turgot, and then Mme. de Polignac to ruin Necker when the latter, who was overrated but honest, had returned, or almost so, to Turgot's ideas.

The 'League for Abuses' that Turgot had denounced, triumphed insolently in this year 1781. All the menaced privileges coalesced. Not only was free commerce in grain suppressed, to the great profit of the monopolist, but forced labor was reestablished; wardenship abuses and special privileges were sanctioned anew; manorial rights were proclaimed legitimate by Parliament; ecclesiastical goods 'from the most modest priory up to the richest abbey' were reserved for the nobility, as were military grades and high judicial functions. The Third Estate was denied its existence in the nation, which the Court pillaged as it willed.

'The reform of these shameful institutions must be ordered,' Dupont repeated continually to Honoré. 'If not, it will take place of its own accord.'

Later he inserted this threatening sentence, which reveals the extent of bourgeois wrath, in the *Cahier du bailliage de Nemours*.

Honoré burned to play his rôle in the political drama which had become inevitable, but he could not entirely forget that he was condemned to death.

If the fact of again being placed 'under the hand of the King' might save him from having his head cut off, neither an arbitrary warrant nor default would be able to protect him from civil death. How would he dare, besides, reclaim his rights from the Comtesse de Mirabeau before he had obtained the revision of her lawsuit? And was not the reclaiming of these rights one of the conditions which had been placed on his release from Vincennes, by the Marquis who, on May 15, in a letter to the Bailiff had entitled himself 'the eternal martyr'?

To tell the truth, this martyr-executioner was somewhat pacified, and the visit of Mirabeau to Gien had not, as one might have feared, troubled the reconciliation between father and son.

On May 18, 1781, a decree from the upper house of the Parliament of Paris had given the decision to the Marquise de Mirabeau and pronounced the separation of the bodies and goods of the husband and wife. The efforts of 'M. Honoré' had failed. This event, which ruined the Marquis, had provoked in him a crisis of humility more sharp and more profound still than that into which he had already been thrown by the death of his grandson. He felt himself discouraged with this struggle against his own family which had occupied his life. The next day when Boucher, at whose home Honoré lived, the du Saillants, the Chevalier, and Dupont opened the door of the salon and pushed Honoré toward his father, the Marquis held out his hand to him, called him 'my friend,' and consented at last to receive him

under his roof. Soon, even, he felt a joy which he had no longer expected in seeing with what solicitude his son surrounded his misfortune.

'He is a good devil,' he said at last, 'who adapts himself to anything, and will always be the least bit of a fool, but for whom any narrow sphere will suffice provided it doesn't grow larger.'

No one is a prophet in his own family.

After the loss of his suit, the Marquis thought of retiring to Provence. After reflecting, he preferred to go to Bignon, alone with Honoré, about whom he now felt a sort of paternal enthusiasm. There this father and son, separated and inimical for ten years, joined forces again and believed they understood each other. Honoré displayed all the resources of an ingenious mind and heart to console the old man. Eight months passed in the country in an abandonment which neither one nor the other had yet known. Honoré prepared the briefs for his future lawsuits, went with his father on his walks, read to him, and was his partner in playing lotto, which, however, put him to sleep. And the Marquis confided his discoveries to the still recalcitrant Bailiff.

'This man has nothing in the world but will power, an unbelievable thing in a person who shows such talent, taste, mentality, and facility with his pen; he has, like the Malabares, great imagination, but is totally lacking in ideas. All is borrowed material or reminiscence, of which he makes his very blood and action. . . . Nor has he any passion. He is voracious and inconsistent, but not at all a gour-

mand nor lover of wine. By what seems to me the queerest chance in the world, he is in every way my diametrical opposite. He cannot endure this, so he puts it out of his mind, at least enough to keep his self-respect. In connection with women, by Heavens, he is utterly exuberant and boastful. He's horribly ugly, but in this game impudence and audacity are the surest arms and that suits him exactly. Moreover, far from being difficult to live with, and having that slanderous, restless, and inimical temperament that he is accused of, he is jolly, flexible, fundamentally good-natured and courteous, but neither tender, nor gallant, nor effeminate nor voluptuous.' (Letter of November 16, 1781.)

These paternal sentiments, which were accompanied by some hard knocks, did nothing more than increase the restlessness of the Marquis when he thought of the future of Honoré. He questioned lawyers, who showed him how little chance his son would have to get the condemnation of Pontarlier revised.

'All the best and the most skillful criminal lawyers whom I have consulted say that the affair is frightfully tied up and the sentence firm and unassailable, and the terms so generous that they place his head at the absolute mercy of the judge. Honoré doesn't wish to believe it, rages, roars, and scribbles on paper day and night,' he wrote to the Bailiff on August 18, 1781.

The Marquis would willingly have sought safety

in the procedure of Letters of Royal Pardon, which permitted the King purely and simply to cross out legal condemnations when His Majesty pleased. Honoré refused, intending not to get himself out of the affair alone, but wishing to see Sophie released from the charge with him, and, as was his habit, he would consider nothing but tactics; that is, getting at the bottom of the difficulty. In addition, the orator in him was becoming active. He had his plea ready. He wished to make it, no matter what the risk.

On February 2, 1782, he left Bignon accompanied by an attorney, des Birons, and a resourceful valet, Legrain. He sent the attorney ahead to the President de Monnier and to his daughter, Mme. de Valdahon, and, when his envoy was not received, he presented himself on February 12 at the prison of Pontarlier which he entered this time voluntarily.

What a clamor in the city! Was it not enough for this Mirabeau to have carried off six years ago the wife of the most important person in Pontarlier? Must he come back now to rewaken the scandal? The provincial magistracy swore to present a solid front in avenging the outraged honor of the gentleman of the long robe. Mirabeau's only friend, the attorney Michaud, excused himself and yielded his place to his substitute Sombarde, who was a near relative of the Marquis de Monnier. Mirabeau had promised himself to be calm and conciliatory. But the irritation that was caused by him irritated him in his turn. From the time when, on February 16, the substitute Sombarde opposed the provisional

liberty which the voluntary prisoner asked, the latter, in an appeal to the public from the underground cell where they had shut him up beneath the courtroom, sent out a brief in which he recalled all this suit on rape by seduction, in which there was no trace of rape.

'Yes, it was pronounced in two hours by four judges (the others not voting), that the head of a gentleman of quality should fall at the feet of the executioner, and that an interesting and gentle young woman, beloved in the places where she has been left to fade away, should be submitted to process of law and cut off from the number of the living. . . . All that was pronounced in two hours . . . and they deliberated over my head!'

One wonders if this fury was of a nature to win him the four magistrates who were to judge him and of whom two were allied to the family of de Monnier. Certainly the order to lock him up was renewed.

No matter! During six months Mirabeau, always in prison, continued in this same tone: 'He humiliated the witnesses, exasperated the judges, insulted every one,' the Marquis wrote to his brother, April 8, 1782. Nothing was more true. The tumult lasted into August and was so contagious that the valet Legrain got himself into it. He met the King's lawyer, who was returning from the hunt with his dogs, in the square of Pontarlier, and lashed his face with a flip of the whip: 'Can it be that I had the misfortune to hit the King's lawyer in place of the

dog? That is unbelievable,' he said, excusing himself as though out of respect for the profession.

At length the strange prisoner became the terror of the city and of the magistracy. He abounded in artifices of procedure, called for corroboration on the Parliament of Besançon, and on the Council of State of Neuchâtel, dragged the commander of the city, M. de Saint-Mauris, in the mud, published brief after brief, arraigned his judges, created such an uproar that no one felt himself in safety any longer and every one desired to see him packed off. So the de Ruffey family, the de Monnier family, and the magistrates themselves felt much easier upon seeing M. du Saillant arrive at last. They hurried to write out, sign, and confirm a transaction by which, August 14, 1782, the sentence pronounced against Mirabeau and Sophie was declared 'void in all its points,' the husband and wife de Monnier separated, bodies and goods, and Sophie's *dot* restored to her provided she remained in the convent until her husband's death and one year afterward. Mirabeau returned into society, not humbly, like a condemned person who has been absolved, but by breaking in, as suited his nature.

To begin with he did not possess a red cent and could hardly expect money from his father who had paid his debts contracted on coming out of Vincennes and spent a little more than he was able in the course of the lawsuit. A bookseller of Neuchâtel, Fauche, had, as we remember, formerly bought the *Essai sur le despotisme.* Mirabeau hurried to sell

him his book on *Lettres de cachet et les prisons de l'état* as well as *l'Espion dévalisé*, a mass of anecdotes gathered in the dungeon of Vincennes. He was not sorry, besides, to place a frontier, for some time, at all events, between his father and himself, for since the Marquis had renewed his relations with Mme. de Pailly, his tone had changed greatly in regard to Honoré and the latter did not feel himself extremely reassured as to parental intentions.

Neuchâtel was filled at this time with exiled Genevans, who had been banished from their country by France, which had taken the part of the aristocrats of Geneva and, with an expedition, had put an end to the passing success of the democratic party. Mirabeau was enthusiastic over the cause of the vanquished, and addressed to M. de Vergennes, Minister of Foreign Affairs, a tract which demonstrated to him that France had just committed a political error. Scarcely given possession of his civic rights again, he thus intervened in the affairs of the nation with an audacious haste. His personal affairs might, meanwhile, have sufficed him.

Must he not return to Provence and try to regain his privileges as husband?

As soon as he felt himself sure of his father and of his uncle, he left Neuchâtel and, on the evening of October 19, 1782, in the glow from bonfires and amid the noise of shots fired in his honor, he made his solemn entry into this château of Mirabeau from which his creditors had chased him eight years before.

'One thing which astonished me,' wrote the Bailiff several days later, 'is the joy these people here show in seeing him arrive, although he be the debtor of some among them.' (November 8, 1782.) This was because of the nephew's possessing 'the terrible gift of familiarity' of which the Marquis speaks now and then, and also because of the peasants' being carried away by the story of his successive imprisonments to the extent of considering him a victim of their lords like themselves.

On the other hand, the commotion which Mirabeau's arrival had produced at Pontarlier when he fell from the skies into the city prison could have passed for the most drab indifference compared to the horror which his return to Provence aroused in Aix. Business stopped, receptions were suspended, dinners were cancelled.

'A man has come who upsets the balls and the theatricals at Tholonet, and since then one no longer sells a thing,' a fashionable merchant of Aix said naïvely to the Bailiff in January, 1783.

After the death of the Comte de Valbelle, his scepter had passed to the Comte de Galiffet, rich enough to have some eight hundred thousand livres income, and the Château de Tholonet, one league from Aix, had succeeded the Château de Tourves as the center of Provençal fêtes. It was there that the Comtesse de Mirabeau had lost her son under the suspicious circumstances that we know. She consoled herself by acting in plays, by dancing, and by singing. The rôle of grass-widow must have seemed

very agreeable to her at a time when this star part was not so general as to-day. Émilie de Mirabeau excelled in it. Besides, it was somewhat the same sort of part as those which they assigned to her, for she passed for the best actress in the province.

At the news that the Comte was going to arrive, was arriving, had arrived, the Comte de Galiffet felt a little of the agony of the director of the theater who is in danger of having his star carried away. The Marquis de Marignane, who had been dissipating his pretty fortune very gracefully for some years, trembled at being disturbed in this gentle occupation. All the gentlemen around feared for their amusements and, hanging on to the Comtesse de Mirabeau and begging her not to leave them, swore to defend her against the pretensions of the intruder. To sum it up, as Mirabeau was to write, 'this little sovereign does not wish to wake up and see her dream of overly charming widowhood vanish, and all those who profited from her dream are rocking her cradle to prolong it.'

They decided to organize what we should to-day call the boycotting of Mirabeau: he must not find a friend, nor even a lawyer to sustain him. Foreseeing a lawsuit, they rallied all the witnesses as one would raise soldiers, and they mobilized twenty-three lawyers, almost all that pleaded in Provence.

Three days after his return to Mirabeau, Honoré wrote to his wife that he 'took so much more pleasure in being in Provence again' because now he

would be 'more within reach of news of the health of Mme. de Mirabeau and of all that concerned her.' She replied that she did not wish to leave her father, that M. de Marignane 'is very determined never to live with M. de Mirabeau,' and that she had helped to give her husband back his liberty and would now defend her own 'by the means which the justice of her cause offered.'

The Bailiff, to whom this reply was addressed, became animated in reading it. He had never believed in the 'rejoining' of the husband and wife, to take over the expression of the Marquis. He had warned his brother in many letters throughout the course of the year.

He had begged the Marquis not to send him Honoré, whom he never wanted to hear of again. But the eldest had decided, he obeyed, and engaged himself thoroughly in the negotiations and, since it was necessary, in the battle. By a surprising change, it was his nephew who mollified him now. 'You have no idea of your nephew on great occasions,' the Marquis had written to the Bailiff on March 1. 'Everything should yield to the ascendancy of M. le Comte,' he had added June 21, 'though from afar all deny him, near by no one resists him but himself.' The Bailiff verified the justice of this statement and no longer resisted the magic that Mirabeau exercised on all who surrounded him. If Émilie de Marignane should see, should hear her husband! . . . 'he could have his wife and even his father-in-law if he wished,' the Marquis decreed October 21. 'But the

scoundrel does not wish it; he wishes to be the country buffoon and end up in a dungeon.'

This variability of the Marquis, which age seemed to emphasize, began to wear out the excellent Bailiff. 'Apparently you know better in Paris what is passing in Aix than we who are here do,' he replied on December 30.

The house of Marignane was guarded for fear that the son-in-law might enter it. A letter was obtained from the Attorney-General Leblanc de Castillon, denouncing Mirabeau to the Ministry as the author of the book on *Lettres de cachet* which had just appeared; thus they hoped to get rid of him by dooming him to the Bastille. Meanwhile Mirabeau had never been so tranquil, so patient. His letters, his efforts, the visits of the Bailiff, brought nothing to one or the other but rebuffs. Uncle and nephew persisted, offered the arbitration of four gentlemen or of four magistrates. The Marignanes refused. 'It is possible that the young woman wants a court judgment to constrain her to act, in order to avoid appearing to go against her father's wishes,' the Bailiff then mused (December 3). But here the Marquis, who had suddenly abandoned his projects, reproached his son for pursuing them; 'I want no more of the woman who plays theatricals while they cut off her husband's head (in effigy) . . . as for the husband . . .' (November 10.)

'It is by your order that Honoré is here,' replied the Bailiff on December 3, who was exasperated at last. 'What has he come to do in Provence? . . .'

(December 25.) 'You send me your son, do you want me to have him boiled or roasted?' (January 6, 1783.)

The paternal about-face was explained, however, and Mirabeau unveiled the motive for it the following November 17 to his sister du Saillant: 'All the difficulties that we meet here, *vis-à-vis* the Marignanes, whose twenty-three lawyers have clearly told them that they have not the shadow of legal means for demanding the separation, come from a dozen letters from my father in which he paints me as the most rascally of men; and, moreover, from two in which he gives his word of honor that he will never suffer me to reclaim Mme. de Mirabeau.'

Meanwhile the affair had become so involved that from now on there was more humiliation in withdrawing than in being beaten. A last letter from Mirabeau to the Comtesse having been sent back to him unopened, he presented, February 28, 1783, a request to obtain 'that an order be drawn up enjoining his wife to come to him.' On March 8 a counter-request was made by the Marignanes. The lawsuit began.

Mirabeau published a tract composed of letters which his wife had written him since their separation, with this epigraph chosen from one of them; 'May God will to unite us soon, for we are not made to be separated.' On March 20, he presented himself before the Seneschal's Court of Aix to plead his cause himself.

He had against him the audience, the city, and

the lawyers, who rebelled at his pretensions in doing without them and who tried at first to deny him the privilege of speaking. M. de Marignane sneered at seeing him arrive, ugly and sullen, 'with round and rolling eyes.' But as Mirabeau talked, the father-in-law turned his head, then lowered it. The assistants saw his face grow stiff to prevent shedding tears, then imagined that he was going to get up and embrace his son-in-law, and finally had the desire to throw him toward him. They were seized with such emotion that they forgot their months and years of self-possession. 'It is to Mme. de Mirabeau that I have confided my defense. Seek among her letters her opinion of our union. Without doubt you will not challenge her in her own cause . . .' When the plea was ended, half of the room was crying, convinced that a conspiracy had really been formed to separate the husband and wife, and the people accompanied with applause until he reached the street the man whom they had come to dishonor.

'He pleaded with a great deal of calmness and moderation,' admitted M. de Marignane. 'Truth was the only thing lacking.'

Aix had just discovered an unknown Mirabeau, capable of controlling himself and of dominating his adversaries by the sole force of a serene dialectic.

The next day in spite of the almost respectful reply of Portalis, whom a plea against Beaumarchais had already made famous, the court gave the decision to Mirabeau. But the Marignanes made appeal to the Parliament and published a brief of one

hundred and two pages, of which sixty-one were filled with the letters from the Marquis de Mirabeau against his son. It was under the accusation of these terrible letters, and of a contemptuous plea this time from Portalis, terminating in this apostrophe, 'Better to be defamed than praised by you,' that Mirabeau arose before the Parliament on August 23, 1783. He knew that here the habitual guests of the Marignanes dominated and that the chair of minister of the public was occupied by M. de Calissane, actor at Tholonet as was Mme. de Mirabeau.

He no longer used the same tone as before the judges of the Seneschal's Court: 'My intentions and my hopes have changed, as you certainly must realize . . .' Now he demanded that his wife be put in a convent.

'Mme. de Mirabeau does not wish to leave her paternal home for the conjugal fireside or the convent. Has not some one said: *If the convent were prescribed as a precaution, it would be an injustice, an indecency, and an injury.* Yes, without doubt, it is above all just that a young and amiable woman should delight a society where all the young men of the city are admitted and from which her husband only is excluded!' With an irony so much the more terrible because the terms of it were so purposely moderated, Mirabeau described this paternal household with its hubbub: 'We have no need to give ourselves up to suppositions in order to know how Mme. de Mirabeau will live from now on in the paternal home. She will live there, messieurs, as she has

lived there for nine years. . . . One will see her as one has seen her, on strolls without her father . . . at clubs without her father, at plays without her father. . . . She has been seen embellishing the society of a man who has no wife, she has been seen in the house of this man producing diversions in the society theater. . . . It is decent that a woman who is pleading for separation should be the heroine of clubs, of suppers, of concerts, and the heroine even of a theater.'

Next came the discussion of all the causes for separation invoked against him. There were eight of them: 'Let us take a deep breath and reply.'

He replied without taking a breath. His plea rose by degrees to a height where it suddenly stopped, as before the sudden apparition of a gulf:

'Mme. de Mirabeau complains of having been slandered. No, I have not slandered her, I could not slander her.' And slowly, as after a last hesitation, Mirabeau read publicly the letter, the old letter of which he had never yet spoken and which all the province was to know, the letter of rupture which Mme. de Mirabeau had written to her lover in other days, M. de Gassaud, and which constituted a veritable confession of adultery. What an excuse for the adultery of the husband! And what force it borrowed from a nine years' silence! 'Very well, messieurs, shall we still say that Mme. de Mirabeau ought to be sequestered in her father's home . . . that this house is a sanctuary of morals, the first refuge of innocence . . . ? The man to whom the

letter which I have just revealed is addressed lived a whole winter in the home of M. de Marignane in the rooms which were destined for me.'

And now, when the judges, the audience, awaited an avenging apostrophe against this unworthy woman, the powerful voice became soothing, called up the days of repentance, the love letters, the woman that Mme. de Mirabeau could become, made tears spring from the audience until the moment when the orator turned on Portalis as on the representative responsible for these men of law who had taken possession of his wife, prevented her from receiving him and from listening to him, and he at last let his fury loose: 'And you, who have questioned me so much during the last two sessions, answer in your turn . . .'

There followed a magnificent panegyric of lawyers who devoted themselves to the defense of the oppressed and from among whom Mirabeau isolated his opponent to take him by the throat: 'But if one of them, under the shelter of the impunity accorded and because of the profession of which independence is the soul, is known only for that guilty facility which, always imbued with irrelevant passions, soothes or irritates at will . . . if he invents or changes the nature of the facts . . . if he mutilates or falsifies all the documents that he cites . . . such a man . . . Martial has named him for me . . . he is a merchant of lies, of words, and of insults.'

Upon coming out of the courtroom, Portalis took to his bed and pretended to be ill. The Marignanes

had lost countenance in the eyes of all. Some days later, M. de Galiffet received a sword thrust from Mirabeau as his due.

All this did not prevent the Parliament pronouncing the separation of the husband and wife. Mirabeau was avenged. He was not a victor. The crowd believed him right. Justice made him out wrong.

This ensuing enigma remains to be explained. Seventeen years after this lawsuit, nine years after the death of the Deputy, in Paris, in the residence, in the room, in the bed of Mirabeau, surrounded by his portraits, murmuring the tune he loved, blessing the child he had adopted, her hands in the hands of his sister du Saillant, Émilie de Marignane, back again at the deserted hearth after having emigrated and married a gentleman who had died at the end of some months, raised, before dying, on March 6, 1800, a last look of love toward the portrait of the husband whom she had never since seen.

CHAPTER XIII

A Poor Polemist

In the autumn of 1783, Mirabeau found himself in Paris at war with his century.

The Marquis refused to receive him and solemnly resigned his paternal authority into the hands of the King. No longer having enough influence to put his son into the Bastille, he would have loved to see a more powerful person take it upon himself. The son took advantage of this to demand that they raise the interdiction. He failed to obtain it. So he asked that at least they produce for him the accounts of the guardianship. He won this point, and discovered that the different policemen charged to pursue him from Savoy to Provence, from Provence to Holland, were on the list of the rare creditors reimbursed by his father. Beautiful motive for a lawsuit! How could a Mirabeau fail to seize upon it? It was the turn of the son now to take the legal offensive.

On the other hand, he must make a petition of appeal against the decision of the Parliament of Aix, which had so well served the Marignanes. A new tract was printed which the Keeper of the Seals, M. de Miromesnil, ordered suppressed. War now on M. de Miromesnil! The tract reappeared in Holland, preceded by a pamphlet against the Keeper of the Seals.

Mirabeau did not come into the world to make

life easy for his contemporaries. However, his own life was not easy either. He lacked money. To be sure, his quarrel with his father brought him closer to his mother for sufficient time to have her sign a bill of exchange for thirty thousand francs, of which he put nineteen thousand in his pocket.

Then he became grandiose. He bought horses, installed himself in the chaussée d'Antin, had servants and mistresses, adopted a child — all the luxuries. Too many luxuries! The sad and furious husbands came to complain of his having seduced their wives. Two fell upon him during the single month of May, 1784, one of whom had received the information from the gentle and maternal Marquise de Mirabeau herself. The husband who permitted himself to be reassured had so much the better of it, for Mirabeau cordially proposed to the other to throw him out of the window.

Happily his sweethearts employed slightly more ingenious proceedings to quiet conjugal jealousy. One of them had a nineteen-year-old companion, Mme. de Nehra. In order to excuse Mirabeau's visits, she pretended he was in love with her young friend. She made a mistake, for he became so, and, when the two women had quarreled, Mirabeau was to be seen every day for three months in the parlor of a convent wooing a child of nineteen years through a grill.

Mme. de Nehra confided later that the first time she had seen this monster, she had recoiled with horror. So well did he know how to persuade her

that he could not do without her that soon she could not do without him. Illegitimate daughter of a French woman and a Dutch gentleman, Guillaume Van Haren, of which name Nehra constitutes the anagram, she had scarcely known her father before he died tragically. Then she was alone in the world. She dreamed of devoting herself to this outlaw whom society seemed to reject. 'Relatives, friends, fortune, all had abandoned him,' she was to write after the death of her lover. 'I alone remained to him and wished to take the place of everything for him. . . . I swore to exist only for him, to follow him everywhere, to expose myself to everything that would do him service in good and bad fortune.'

She left the convent, went to live with him, and applied herself to systematizing the life of this magnificent happy-go-lucky. She made him sell his horses (thanks to which the poor beasts perhaps got something to eat at last), reduce his household to one servant girl, and, as she could not prevent him from entering all the shops to buy her presents, she returned after him to give them back to the merchants.

They formed a couple of opposites: she, reserved, delicate, and blonde, carrying the candor of nineteen years in her blue eyes; he, bombastic, pock-marked, enormous, tempestuous, and seeming at thirty-six to have long ago passed his fortieth year. They felt tender admiration for each other, but no passion. Moreover, she did not suffer from his infidelities. 'He took no trouble,' she said, 'to hide from me what

gave me no pain.' This constant gentleness rested Mirabeau from his storms, from his lawsuits, from his prisons. At the side of this calm young woman, of the little child whom they both watched over, he had at last the feeling that he could be a man like other men and that with a bastard and an illegitimate girl, he had made a home — or very nearly.

During this time the lawsuit against his wife in the court of appeals followed its course by itself. As things stood, Mirabeau would have been very vexed to have won it. Luckily this embarrassment was spared him. But the definite loss of his case ruined all that might have remained to him of public esteem. However, he had to live.

Long ago at the Choquard Pension, in the time of his childhood, he had had two English boys as comrades, the Elliot brothers, of whom the eldest, Gilbert, had become a member of the British Parliament, and the youngest, Hugh, the British Minister to Copenhagen. The latter, enthusiastic over the book on *Lettres de cachet*, had proposed to his schoolfellow through common friends 'that, in case he should be free,' he could find refuge in England, and the chance 'to pursue with him the career of ambassador.'

And Mirabeau to-day was free and as poor as he was free. So in the month of August, 1784, the former comrade of the Elliots embarked for London with Mme. de Nehra and Coco (this was the name of his adopted son).

Alas! Hugh's enthusiasm had cooled and, besides,

he was in Denmark. As to Gilbert, he was taking the waters at Bath with his family. Mirabeau joined him there and a few hours sufficed him to terrify this peaceable British family.

Gilbert wrote to his brother the next day: 'He paid court so precipitously to Henrietta [the Elliots' sister] whom he counted on subjugating in a week, so absolutely dumbfounded my John Bull of a wife who understands no more about the French than does Molly, the chambermaid, so horrified my little boy by caressing him, so completely disposed of me between luncheon and supper, so astonished all my friends, that I had great trouble in keeping peace in his vicinity, and, if he had not been recalled unexpectedly to the city this morning, I am sure that my wife's patience, I don't wish to say her politeness, would not have held out.'

The irruption of this seductive bear in cold British society took on the aspect of an enormous farce, an animal-trainer farce. One imagines without difficulty to what the chance which Hugh Elliot had offered him 'to pursue the career of ambassador' had been reduced in a few days.

Our traveler remained in England for eight months, however, held by a vague hope and above all by an infinite curiosity.

The British nation was then prey to a strange tumult. England and Scotland hated each other, Ireland was in a volcanic state, Parliament was corrupt and despised. Religious passions blew political passions into flame. Clubs were started

everywhere; these developed into meetings when they did not develop into insurrections, like the anti-Papist and anti-Parliamentary riots of 1780, or that of 1782 in the course of which the crowd set fire to residences, opened the prisons, and hunted down peers, bishops, and ambassadors. The parties threw pamphlets, newspapers, and volleys of bad words at one another's heads, all of which contrasted harshly with French habits of politeness. The succession of Ministers made one think of a ghost race.

In his instructions to the Marquis de Noailles in 1783, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. de Vergennes, expressed this judgment on England, which since then so many English Ministers have had the occasion to apply to France: 'Nothing is so variable as the politics of the cabinet of Saint James's, nor more submissive to the momentary influence of the Ministry, of which the almost daily change prevents the cabinet of Saint James's from having fixed principles on the affairs of the Continent.'

In addition, the Treaty of Versailles, September, 1783, had just sanctioned the loss of the American colonies and humiliated England before France in Europe. Then King George III, who had mounted the throne in 1760, was seized five years after by his first fit of folly and distributed power to his favorites with an imprudence which seemed to doom him to the fate of the Jameses and Charleses in a country which had already learned to discard and decapitate its kings.

This vast disorder left the field free for strong personalities, no matter what might be the scandal of their private lives. Was not a former actor, now bankrupt, like Sheridan, to see himself on the point of governing England?

During the visit of Mirabeau the struggle concentrated itself around the twenty-five-year-old Prime Minister, William Pitt. In three months of power, the young head of the government had drawn a minority fourteen times and was not troubled by such a little thing. The fifteenth time, upon a bill of remonstrance being backed by Burke and voted in by the voice of a majority, he dissolved the House of Commons. This happened in March, 1784. When he arrived in August, Mirabeau could judge of the intensity of the battle. On January 25, 1785, he was present for the opening of Parliament. The leaders discussed freely and publicly, face to face, the affairs of the kingdom, held their authority by their own talent, and imposed the power of their words on the people and on the King. What an example for France! Mirabeau already imagined himself launching turn by turn the thunderbolts of Sheridan, the battering-ram of Burke, the soaring wings of Fox, or struggling against all three with the knife edge of William Pitt.

His intoxication, however, did not carry him so far as to make him wish himself eternally in England. British phlegm repelled his temperament too much. 'Though I don't think with M. de Lauraguais that the English have no ripe fruits but cooked apples

and nothing polished but steel, I believe that they have nothing to justify their ferocious pride,' he wrote to Chamfort. 'But what is liberty, then, when the little of it which is to be found in one or two good laws can place in the front rank a people who are so little favored by nature?'

Having worn out his interest in the spectacle, having found as his only remunerative work the writing of a book taking the side of Holland against Joseph II, who was then threatening war to secure the liberty of the Scheldt, having published a book against the Order of Cincinnati which aimed to create in America a sort of hereditary nobility, having at last engaged in a lawsuit, in order not to lose the habit, against his secretary Hardy, who had had the imprudence to claim his wages, Mirabeau felt himself finished with England. Still he must be certain of not being imprisoned upon his return to France.

Prudently, in the month of February, 1785, Mme. de Nehra left alone for Paris. The first information that she gathered was not reassuring. Mirabeau was accused in several police reports of having gone to England only to write against the French government. His pamphlet on the freedom of the Scheldt, being hostile to Austria, had exasperated the Queen. But love always gives audacity to women, and sometimes genius. Mme. de Nehra went straight to Versailles, to the Baron de Breteuil, Grand Master of Arbitrary Warrants. His Grace spoke to the Minister, the Minister persuaded the King, and Mira-

beau was able to return without hindrance in April.

Immediately he found a friend he had made long ago in Neuchâtel by taking the part of the Genevese democrats against M. de Vergennes. Clavière had not succeeded in Geneva, but his status of foreigner gave him good standing in France.

It seemed at this time that the fate of the French monarchy was going to swing between two Swiss bankers, Necker and Panchaud. The first, since his famous resignation of 1781, had the city on his side. The second had Calonne with him; that is to say, the Court. Clavière, himself, dreamed of succeeding Necker some day and consequently did not like him. From time to time he would go and contemplate the residence of the Controller-General of Finances and would say, with his timid air, upon returning to the pretty Mme. Clavière, 'I have been to see our future home.' Mme. Clavière believed it with all her soul, for they were united in the same calm and persistent ambition. Besides, the Revolution was to reveal the correctness of their presentiments. Clavière was to become Minister of Public Contributions in 1792.

While waiting his time, the Genevese democrat, having recognized the insufficiency of his means of expression, sought some one who could give his ideas power. He had admired Mirabeau ever since he had written the letter to M. de Vergennes, for which, moreover, he, Clavière, had furnished the principal elements. Perhaps he, before all others, discerned Mirabeau's genius. 'He is a great man,' he wrote

as early as December, 1784. As soon as he had learned of Mirabeau's return from England, he went to inquire for him and introduce him to Panchaud.

Two months later, Mirabeau published with glittering success his first financial work: *De la caisse d'escompte.* These few weeks had sufficed him to profit from the lessons he had received in the school of finances which the eloquent and pompous Panchaud, court banker, held, and the pupils of which were called the Abbé de Périgord, the Duc de Lauzun, the Comte de Narbonne, the Comte d'Antraigues, and the last, Mirabeau. To tell the truth, Clavière had once again fed the talent of his friend. Mirabeau excelled in thus assimilating the thought of others.

He was a prodigious setter of jewels, born to govern a world of secretaries, to receive from them carefully prepared briefs, to assimilate these with a marvelous promptitude and make them animate with his life. He invented little, but understood all. Statesman much more than writer, he received from others his subjects and moulded them with his passion. It was because of this that so many protestations arose from collaborators who felt that they had composed the books and the speeches of the Deputy and could not understand why, deprived of him, their works remained indifferent and useless, as the stone which has not yet touched the miraculous ring of the prophet.

Mirabeau was very fortunate in receiving his in-

itiation into finance at the hour when the financial problem was to make all others seem pale and to impose itself supremely on the public mind.

Necker had won popularity in publishing, in the month of February, 1781, his famous *compte rendu* which Maurepas, with his old skepticism this time justified, baptized 'An Old Wives' Tale.' Then, when secrets of State were not yet given out in the market-place, the apparent frankness of the Director-General of the Treasury, Minister in fact, spreading out before the country the results of his administration, had the effect of an heroically honest gesture because of its novelty. When Necker gloriously posted an excess of twenty-seven million five hundred thousand francs in receipts over the ordinary expenses, who would dare to upset this beautiful edifice of optimism by showing, in place of surplus, a deficit which actually reached in the year 1780, one hundred and fourteen million eight hundred thousand livres? The rectification was then of importance in an epoch when the taxes raised in the name of the King did not go beyond the figure, which is to-day despicable, of five hundred and ten million livres.

At least there was one person in the kingdom determined not to be duped by Necker, he who had occupied Necker's place since the end of 1783, the amiable and brilliant Calonne.

Enemies, pondered Calonne, are a luxury prohibited to a controller-general of finances. Having seen the Queen turn out, one after another, Turgot,

Necker, the tame Joly de Fleury, and even the innocent Ormesson, as soon as one of them dared to oppose in the least the squandering of the Court, he himself, persuaded that he did not have Marie-Antoinette's confidence, tried to win it by never haggling with the courtiers. This did not prevent him from clearly seeing the need for profound reform, nor from seeing through Necker's game, nor from measuring the value of that instrument of credit called public opinion. He wished to hear said what he dared not say himself, and he found to this purpose a man of talent, capable of giving and of receiving the blows in his place. Clavière, who did him services, brought to him the author of the book *De la caisse d'escompte.*

The Minister would without doubt have been able to discover, among the rather moderated criticisms addressed by Mirabeau to this institution of money circulation, some blame which touched him personally. But he was not spiteful. If one could have filled the treasury with good will, M. de Calonne would have been an ideal Minister of Finance.

At the moment when a letter from Mirabeau relative to the restoration of the Compagnie des Indes, resuscitated some months before, served him as a pretext for an interview, M. de Calonne was very busy placing a loan, the mechanism of which rather resembled that of the one M. Caillaux launched on his return from banishment. But, although for some time such furious stock-jobbing had recommenced in the rue Vivienne as to recall the good days

of the rue Quincampoix, the bonds for French loans were much less coveted in 1785 than certain foreign securities, and above all less than the securities of the Spanish Bank of Saint Charles founded in Madrid by the financier Cabarrus, on principles analogous to those which formerly had ruined Law.

When he had congratulated and flattered Mirabeau, when he had talked to him of the sort of mission to which the success of his book called him, of the great rôle that he could play in enlightening the ignorant crowd, in popularizing financial questions, M. de Calonne let himself go on, as though slipping into the train of confidences, and spoke of the Bank of Saint Charles, and of the danger it had incurred for the holders of its bonds in pushing up the rate to the point to which it had mounted. Mirabeau improved upon the matter. The Minister appeared to be struck with a sudden light:

'Ah! If you could only write what I have just heard!'

'I will write it,' Mirabeau said, happy to collaborate for once with the government.

Upon returning to his home, he found the work almost finished already by Clavière and Brissot de Warville. Eight days afterward the book appeared. The securities of the bank fell from eight hundred livres to four hundred and twenty. The Minister was satisfied. There remained nothing more for him to do but to clear himself of the suspicion of having collaborated with Mirabeau. This he did in order-

ing the suppression of the book by the decree of July 17, 1785.

Mirabeau could not accept the disavowal. He continued his campaign with a new pamphlet against the agent in France for the Bank of Saint Charles, Le Couteulx de la Noraye, and went on from there to an attack against the water company of Paris, founded by the brothers Périer, who engaged Beaumarchais to reply to him. In a few months he was known as a great polemist. Even the name of him whom the Périers put against him helped to classify him. Without doubt he was not yet respected, for he passed for serving the interests and the ideas of Panchaud, who obviously helped him to live. But those who were close to the opponent of Necker understood the true reasons for the empire he exercised over Mirabeau as over so many others. Creator under Turgot of the Discount Bank which was to become the Bank of France, then of the Sinking Fund Office, Panchaud belonged to that race of bankers of ideas who, accustomed by the wide interspread of their affairs to enveloping the entire extent of the markets with the same attention, finish by considering the State as a great banking house for which they hold themselves responsible and the prosperity of which brings them honor. When the time came that Panchaud was recalled from his position, ceased to be the court banker, saw himself condemned to bankruptcy and ruin, Mirabeau remained unshakably faithful to him.

'Here is this poor man in the abyss hollowed out

by his own services, by his own good deeds,' he wrote in 1788 to Mme. de Nehra.

Moreover, it is certain that Mirabeau never sought to turn to account the influence that his books had in order to attempt the least speculation himself. That he was in that period of his life an instrument is true. That he wrote against his belief is not true. He really believed in the mission that M. de Calonne assigned him, and fulfilled it with a constant care for the public good, and an independence the vigor of which the Minister of Finances was to recognize more than once.

How curious were the relations of these two men, who were so dissimilar and yet so well matched in physical ugliness, that they seemed reassured one by the other: Mirabeau all force, Calonne all finesse, the former full of vehemence, the latter full of politeness, and both satisfied at the end of each interview, the one with having beguiled Mirabeau, and the other with having persuaded Calonne, up to the moment when each one lost his illusions about the other.

Then Mirabeau burst forth and breathed out his fury in pamphlets, and all the cleverness of the Abbé de Périgord was necessary to arrange a passing reconciliation.

Any one who had been present at the interviews between Mirabeau and Calonne might, moreover, have foretold the Revolution.

Calonne, much more conscious than certain historians have believed, felt himself caught between

the privileged class and the nation, obliged to bring down the hatchet on the privileged in order to procure resources for the State, and condemned to see Parliament refuse to put through his plans for loans and taxes as soon as the privileged class seemed to be in danger. One day, when he was explaining to Mirabeau the dilemma in which he felt himself walled up, the future deputy recalled the session of the British Parliament during which he had had the vision of the rôle to play in an analogous assembly to be brought together some day on French territory.

'And why, in place of this court of magistrates, don't you convoke a national assembly?'

That day a scheme for a parliament against the Parliament commenced to form in the mind of Calonne.

CHAPTER XIV

The Noble Lupanar of Berlin

ONE evening in March, 1786, the Abbé de Périgord entered the home of Panchaud, holding under his arm a considerable manuscript.

'What is that?' the habitués of the salon asked in one voice.

'A work destined to make a fortune if ever the reading of it is permitted in Mme. Necker's house,' replied the Abbé.

'The name of the author?'

'Guess.'

'Thomas,' said Clavière.

'Buffon,' said d'Antraigues.

'Ducis,' said Lauzun.

'Dorat,' said Panchaud.

'Oh, no, messieurs, simply Mirabeau.'

'Oh!' said the assembly.

Clavière raised his arms to the skies and added:

'It isn't possible!'

'Read it to us,' Panchaud said simply.

Seated at the table under a lamp, the Abbé began: 'Now, monsieur, this moment has arrived which I predicted and which I truly feared, this moment when my reputation, my principles, my security, my honor, and, above all, the good of my country, command me equally to summon you to the court of public opinion and to make it a judge between us.'

'To whom is he addressing himself?' asked Clavière.

'Why, to M. de Calonne,' smiled the Abbé.

The faces grew longer. As page succeeded page, the consternation became more profound. From time to time the reader would interrupt himself to judge the effect and seemed to be amused upon finding it sinister.

The entire story of Mirabeau's relations with Calonne was gone through. Grievance succeeded grievance. At the passage which concerned him Clavière could not prevent himself confessing with despair:

'Obviously he is right.'

Then came the turn of Lauzun: 'A man who is very dear to me, by whom I am loved, and against whom I have no other reproach to make than his excessive weakness for you . . . was asked to come to the Controller-General's and there you charged him to tell me that the Queen was very discontent with me because . . .'

'Ah, ah!' interrupted the Duc.

'Why ah, ah?' asked the general agent for the clergy.

'It is this that our friend has not pardoned.'

'In truth, M. le Duc?'

'In truth, M. Panchaud. I am going to confide to all of you a secret, for it is thus that secrets are agreeable: our dear Mirabeau is in love with the Queen.'

A general laugh greeted this revelation, but the

CAPTURE OF DE LAUNAY, GOVERNOR OF THE BASTILLE, JULY 14, 1789
From an old print

Abbé seemed suddenly serious, for he was always the first to adapt himself to the incredible.

'My word,' he said, 'that wouldn't astonish me. I recall Mirabeau's work on the Ministry of the Duc d'Aiguillon — that is, the end of Louis XV's reign and the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI — in which he traced to our pretty Queen a complete plan destined to win over the people, a plan which, between you and me, seemed to me made to win over the Queen more than any one else.'

'What a pity that our friend has not Fersen's face!' the Duc de Lauzun sighed, 'and that the Marquise de Coigny has quarreled with the Court and has just, in the matter of the necklace, passionately embraced the side of the Rohans.'

'And then,' the Abbé de Périgord observed with melancholy, 'Marie Antoinette is not Catherine the Second'; and he took up his reading again, leading his listeners from invective to invective up to the last sentence which summarized it all:

'I swear, on the pledge of my honor, always to be ready to present myself and even to constitute myself a prisoner, the day when the King desires that his courts of justice decide whether I am an unbridled slanderer, or whether you are a prevaricating minister.'

'This Mirabeau,' said the Comte d'Antraigues, 'has a passion for prison.'

'A habit, only,' the Abbé corrected. 'Messieurs, you now know the compliments which Mirabeau charges us to have printed.'

'He abuses friendship,' Panchaud remarked.

'That is somewhat my opinion,' the Abbé replied. 'But does it not seem to you that this work destines our friend for a diplomatic career?'

Despite the protest of all, the Abbé commented gently on his paradox. Such a writing could not be permitted to appear. It would serve the Necker interests too much. But one could have it read to M. de Calonne, prove to him in this way how dangerous it was to quarrel with Mirabeau, and then do a service to both adversaries by sending Mirabeau away from France for some time, which would suit the Minister, and by charging him with a mission to the Court of Prussia, which would suit this vagabond who was ambitious to be of service and whose eternal curiosity had just drawn him to Berlin.

The combination seemed very neat. M. de Calonne was soon won over to it. Mirabeau, recalled to Paris in April, 1786, permitted himself to be the more easily persuaded since Frederick II had not appeared to understand his discreet offers of service and since he did not know very well how to exist out of France with his 'horde,' composed of Mme. de Nehra, Coco, and a servant, nor how to go on very well with the great treatise he had begun on *La Monarchie prussienne.*

This Prussia, which Frederick II had just made 'the pivot of peace and of war on the Continent,' appeared to Mirabeau the enigma of the future. In December, 1785, he had left to decipher it, had been received twice by Frederick II, and had become the

intimate of Prince Henry, second brother of the King. July 21, 1786, he returned to Berlin in the state this time of an amphibious diplomat, as he said himself. His mission was not exactly secret, first because he was unable to keep anything secret, then because he never ceased testifying to his relations in the French Ministry, finding no better means to make his influence in Paris properly appreciated by his interlocutors. But his status was not regular and naturally was opposed by the professional diplomats, such as the French minister in Berlin, M. d'Esterno.

Then too during each vacation he demanded a change, now the post of minister in Bavaria, again that of minister at Hamburg or that of plenipotentiary in Holland.

Scarcely had he returned to Berlin when Frederick II died. The accession of the nephew, Frederick William II, inspired Mirabeau with an audacious idea, as were all his ideas, that of sending to the new King a tract teaching him how to govern.

Perhaps this work was the most perfect writing done by Mirabeau. It contains his programme of government. Reading it, one seems to see the armed Revolution spring from his head.

He warns the new King to renounce military glory, a glory in which, after Frederick II, 'no one can achieve more than second place,' and to employ his greatness in protecting liberty, property, and labor.

He recognized with an extreme sureness of mind the vice of the great Frederick which was wishing to

do everything himself: 'As for you, Sire, as it becomes you always to govern well, it will be worthy of you not to govern too much,' he wrote. Then he placed his involuntary pupil on guard against 'the passion for lawmaking . . . characteristic of small minds.' He wished to see him apply the Swiss system of militia; advised him to beware of the aristocracy, 'the scourge of monarchical States, still more of republican States'; wished to see a law giving back 'to the bourgeois the right to acquire noble lands with all the rights attached to them'; demanded the free gift of justice, recognition of the right to work, development of public instruction, complete liberty of the press, the suppression of lotteries, 'unlimited' religious tolerance, and the granting of civil liberty to the Jews.

The most remarkable part of this work was that which treated financial and economic problems. He abounded in formulæ that our day would profit by re-reading: 'How can one help being astonished that Frederick II took up his time in a city like Berlin fixing the prices at the inns, the pay of hired lackeys, and the prices of all the necessaries of life? . . . . Four hundred and twelve monopolies divide up your kingdom. . . . The list of prohibited things in your States exceeds by a great deal that of things permitted, and appears unbelievable even to men who are the most accustomed to the deliriums of the fiscal and regulation-making mind. . . . You should do everything to gain confidence, Sire! . . .'

After having recommended the creation of a bank,

Mirabeau called forth from among his prayers the distribution of immense domains among the cultivators, the 'moderation' of indirect taxes, 'the natural and very just augmentation of direct taxes,' an 'invariable system for favoring all sorts of transportation,' the abolition of monopolies, the freedom of industry, arts, trades, and commerce, that 'commerce which only asks of the King that he do it no harm. . . . Sire, the most beautiful, the surest means of having all that Nature does not deny us is liberty.'

Mirabeau had sketched in these pages the ideal monarchy such as he conceived it, the ideal that he kept until his death.

To be sure, Frederick William II was no more grateful to him than Louis XVI was to be later, and found these counsels in very bad taste. The new sovereign had only the physique of a king. If he stood above all his subjects by a head, it was an empty head. He passed from his mistresses to his favorites, from his favorites to his pastors, from his pastors to his Rosicrucians, used his authority to obtain from the Consistory an authorization for bigamy, and seemed born to avenge Europe of Frederick II.

Up to January, 1787, Mirabeau gathered together every bit of gossip about this 'noble lupanar that is the court of Berlin,' describing the laziness of this monarch whom 'no human power could compel to read more than forty lines at a time,' his irritable vanity which made him 'prefer mediocre or low people,' his mystical whims which put him in the

hands of a Wellner and a Bischoftswerder, always ready to evoke ghosts for him and to make the shade of Julius Cæsar appear in case of need or that of the great Frederick, the manipulation of which was carried on by a ventriloquist.

No one has analyzed with so penetrating a contempt this period of Prussian history when the disasters were being prepared which were to succeed one another for twenty years. And no one has carried through at the same time a clearer diagnosis of the qualities and the defects of this people, its aptitude for being governed, its cleverness in deceiving and its military virtues which made war its 'national industry.'

At the same time that he was writing letters on the situation, addressed to Talleyrand, to be deciphered by the latter and sent to M. de Calonne, Mirabeau composed, with the collaboration of Major Mauvillon, a work on *La Monarchie prussienne* in four quarto volumes. In the middle of this work, in the month of January, 1787, he received news which threw him into an ecstasy.

'I consider as one of the most beautiful days of my life,' he wrote to Talleyrand, 'that one, when you informed me of the convocation of notables which no doubt will only shortly precede that of the National Assembly. I see in it a new order of things which can regenerate the monarchy. I should think myself a thousand times happy to be the least secretary of this assembly for which I have been so fortunate as to produce the idea. . . .'

He had just heard the call of his destiny. Six days later, leaving Mme. de Nehra in Berlin, he again took the road to France.

CHAPTER XV

'My Day is Coming' [1]

THE Marquise de Coigny's pet parrot was of a silent nature.

'Teach him at least, Marquise, to say, "Long live the King,"' begged some one.

The witty friend of the Duc de Lauzun and the Prince de Ligne protested: 'The Lord preserve me! A parrot saying, "Long live the King!" — I would have him no longer. He would be made a notable.'

Upon his first step into the streets of Paris, January 27, 1787, Mirabeau found peddlers offering him little cardboard men whose heads, moved by strings, nodded perpetually and said, 'Yes.'

'Four pennies for the notables!' was cried in his ears.

He shrugged his shoulders. 'Here we are devoured by puns on the most solemn occasion which has ever held the eyes of a nation,' he wrote some days later to his German correspondent, Major Mauvillon. He felt himself 'tempted to curse the ineffaceable frivolity' with which France greeted the convocation of this assembly in which he himself saw a sort of preparatory committee for the true National Assembly. War on the privileged had just started, the end of absolute monarchy was announcing itself: all the world laughed.

[1] Mirabeau, September 2, 1787.

Among the number of those who least understood the gravity of the initiative taken by M. de Calonne was M. de Calonne himself. The invention of an assembly in addition to the Parliament had appeared to him ingenious, because he liked to go around an obstacle. Under the necessity in which he found himself to borrow a few schemes from Necker and many from Turgot in order to ward off the growing deficit, he felt it would be impossible to get them accepted by the gowned nobility who were as attached to the privileged class as was the nobility of the Court or the clergy. The naming of a special assembly seemed to him a happy expedient, and nothing more.

Mirabeau himself wished at last to do away with the confusion of powers established, since the kings had little by little permitted that the royal ordinances, after being communicated as edicts to Parliament to enable it to apply them, should be verified, amended, and sometimes rejected by Parliament in a refusal to register them. His plan consisted of instituting a National Assembly invested with the right to make laws outside of and over the head of the judicial body charged with seeing them observed.

The extent of the misunderstanding can be seen. Where Mirabeau saw the dawn of a new régime, M. de Calonne sought only a convenience. He had brought about the separation of the legislative power and the judicial power by chance, as an operation without consequence from which he was

preparing to draw the sole benefit. Success seemed to him so certain and so easy that his principal care, at the beginning of 1787, consisted in augmenting the figures of the deficit to the end of having a pretext for demanding more resources. In sum, what was it about? Liquidating one hundred millions in arrears and getting one hundred millions more each year from a nation of twenty-six million men who paid in all five hundred millions of taxes and to the expenses of which the rich scarcely contributed at all. How could one suspect that the oldest and most powerful monarchy in the world could not arrive at the solution of so slight a problem?

But the privileged encircled the throne. Reduced in the seventeenth century to a state of domesticity, they had become in the eighteenth the masters of their master. Favor, once one is accustomed to it, seems an acquired right. The hour arrives when governments perish under the insolence of the people whom they have brought to the top. It had sounded for royalty.

At the moment of calling together the Assembly from which he intended to ask that the privilege of exemption from taxes, which was the scandal and ruin of the kingdom, be sacrificed, Calonne could get only four true representatives of the Third Estate entered among the one hundred and forty-four members. From then on, his efforts were doomed.

An engraving of the time admirably summed up the debate which was to open between the Con-

troller-General and the one hundred and forty privileged members of the Assembly. It depicts a farmer gathering together the denizens of his farmyard.

'My dear animals,' he says to them, 'I have assembled you here to deliberate on the sauce in which I wish to put you.'

'We do not want to be eaten!' cries the cock.

'You are evading the question,' the farmer observes.

On the engraving the farmer has the last word. It could not be thus in the Assembly.

Mirabeau asked only to fight for the King against the nobility. Even from the depths of the prison of Vincennes he had never ceased to think in the person of prime minister to the monarchy. He believed in his destiny. Much more! He lived in it. He had wished to be secretary to the notables, to lead them. But when he knew the composition of the Assembly, he wrote to his friend Major Mauvillon, 'I said to myself very soon that I shouldn't be worth anything at that task.'

No one understood better than he the consequences of this revolt of the privileged class which began the Revolution. His book on the Order of Cincinnati had only been one long laying of accusation at the door of the aristocrats. Born among them, he did not feel that instinctive humility in regard to them which places so many bourgeois at the mercy of good breeding and at the feet of a title. One can judge better the salon from which one comes

than the stranger can who stands on the threshold awaiting an invitation.

The Court of Versailles, royal fortresses, exile, British liberty, the salons of Paris, the lupanar of Berlin, poverty and magnificence, love and contempt, Mirabeau had come through all, enriching his mind with all spectacles and all books. He had passed through the castes without becoming fixed in any one of them; his eloquence poured out his ideas as a leader, his griefs as a rebel, his memories as a traveler, and his meditations as a prisoner, as the mixed fruits which roll without end from the symbolic horn of plenty. He felt himself a kind of powerful pariah, brimming over with useless force. At what would he employ himself in the days to come?

One single rôle then remained possible for Mirabeau, that of 'instructor of the nation,' to which he dedicated himself the following year. One finds him composing in haste a *Dénonciation de l'agiotage au roi et à l'assemblée des notables.* The Assembly was scarcely called to order when the pamphlet appeared, accusing impartially, pell-mell, Necker and Calonne, the first with having pretended 'to furnish the expenses of the war by means of continual loans without taxes'; the second with having compromised the credit of the State by maneuvers at the Bourse and with having made 'bankruptcy inevitable.' Mirabeau wrote in concluding, 'The citizen who dares to speak thus and name himself ought to attract some attention to the denunciation which he brings to the

foot of the throne, for he could not find such courage but in the pressing consciousness of a great danger.'

This cry of alarm interrupted the laughter. The public, the Assembly, Louis XVI himself, were stirred. M. de Calonne withdrew his good graces, and on March 18 the Baron de Breteuil exiled three speculators, the Abbé d'Espagnac, the Comte de Seneff, and Baraud. But at the same time he launched the order to shut up Mirabeau in the Château de Ham. The Minister flattered himself in having thus established an equilibrium in repression if not in finances.

Was this the seventeenth arbitrary warrant sent to Mirabeau, as Mme. de Nehra says, or only the tenth, as M. Louis de Loménie calculates? It little matters! This one Mirabeau did not receive. Warned by the Abbé de Périgord, he departed, arrived at Liège and, even while traveling, took it upon himself to break his lance in the face of public opinion which idolized Necker. He had judged at his true value this emphatic banker, who had inspired confidence in others only by the force of his confidence in himself. He had seen him under the aspect in which the great Houdon has shown him to us, who, in sculpturing his bust, bloated the marble.

As Mirabeau was beginning that campaign of letters against Necker which was to pursue him even up to the convocation of the States-General, Mme. de Nehra joined him. As a woman of brains, she formed a plan to get the arbitrary warrant cancelled,

then became restless over the state of her lover's domestic affairs and sought to know if the Marquis had at last deposited his food allowance.

'Oh, yes, apropos of that,' said Mirabeau, 'I wanted to ask you where I am.'

'What! How should I know, at three hundred leagues from Paris? The undertaking of your trip must have made you occupy yourself with it to some extent . . .'

'. . . I had plenty of other things to do than think of all these bagatelles. Do you realize that the horrible stock-jobbing is at its height? Do you know that we are at a moment when perhaps there is not a cent in the public treasury?'

'I smiled,' wrote Mme. de Nehra in the letter in which she recounts this significant anecdote, 'at seeing a man, whose purse was so badly lined, concern himself so little about it and torment himself so much over the public poverty, without thinking of his private distress.'

He at last took account of it:

'Now, my dear,' he said to her, 'here you are. Arrange all that as you like; I approve in advance of all that you do. These details have nothing more to do with me.'

Necker would no doubt have 'smiled' like Mme. de Nehra at seeing a man so careless of his own affairs show such anxiety for those of the State, for ordinary souls do not know that domestic qualities do not make for political virtues, and that the passion for the public good, like that of love and that of

gaming, often drags to ruin those whom it possesses and detaches from the troublesome cares of small domestic interests.

Mirabeau had too much genius to understand anything about prudence. Mme. de Nehra saw this well enough when she wished to go back to Paris, for he suddenly decided to follow her. In vain she reasoned with him. She could only persuade him to stop at Saint-Denis, and await the result of the steps that she was to take. Still, he could not contain himself at the end of several days and set out for her home one morning.

'I was lonesome for you,' he said as his excuse.

Since audacity had once succeeded, the young woman resolved to go again to the Baron de Breteuil and confess all. He promised to shut his eyes, for the time had come when the Ministers felt it necessary to treat Mirabeau with respect. M. de Calonne went so far as to write to his accuser: 'I am going to tell the King that I am ordering you to come back without fear.'

Meanwhile Mirabeau hurried to publish a genuine work, in order not to remain in the eyes of the world simply an author of libels. On May 24, 1787, he left again for Brunswick, found again his collaborator Major Mauvillon, and finished his great treatise on *La Monarchie prussienne*, which appeared in 1788.

In September the Prussian expedition into Holland, which the Duke of Brunswick commanded, obliged Mirabeau to leave his retreat. He came back

to Paris at the very moment when Parliament was reconvened, called back from exile, and when the people, to manifest their joy at its return, burned Calonne in effigy in the place Dauphiné and paraded along the streets jeering after manikins of the Duchesse de Polignac, the Baron de Breteuil, and the Queen.

'Down with Madame Deficit!' howled the crowd.

'I came back justified,' Mirabeau wrote on September 26 to Major Mauvillon, 'and I found to comfort me all the horrors of opprobrium and dementia conspiring to swallow up my country. A nation which was not sick six months ago is lost, debased, and dishonored. . . . It is impossible for a man who thinks and who feels not to be in consternation.'

Since his departure, Calonne had fallen without being able to get one of his projects adopted by his notables, who, in spite of the predictions of men of intelligence, shook their heads negatively to everything. He had been replaced by Brienne, a disbelieving archbishop, who was touched by 'that terrible malady of ministers of never being able to resolve to give to-day what will infallibly be torn from them to-morrow.'

The Assembly of Notables vanished before the resuscitated Parliament. The latter had refused the taxes, and, carried away by the outburst of its opposition, had on July 30, after the furious discourse of the Abbé Sabatier and of the Councillor d'Épré-

mesnil, decided 'that the Lord-King should be very humbly begged . . . to assemble the States-General of his kingdom.'

The people, not understanding, grasped only this word charged with hope: States-General. They were ignorant that the great majority of the parliamentarians were simply occupied in mobilizing for the defense of the threatened privileged classes, the nobility and the clergy, whose mercenary and hereditary positions gave them solidarity.

The arbitrary warrants sent to the parliamentarians on August 5, the reading on the sixth, the protestation of President d'Aligre, the order of exile of the Parliament at Troyes, only further roused the passions of the masses, who believed that the parliamentarians were menaced and exiled for having prohibited the extravagances of the Court and the absolute power of the King. On August 18 the riots began in Paris. The monarchy yielded and called back the exiled magistrates. From that time on, it was discredited.

Mirabeau, who believed that France was 'geographically monarchic,' was almost the only one to discern the extraordinary equivocation on which the popularity of the parliamentarians rested.

He felt that he alone was of a stature to save Royalty. He had his scheme: 'To coalesce,' as he said, 'royal authority with the people against the privileged class.' He offered himself to Brienne, to Montmorin. No one understood him. The Ministry and the King had lost sight of the origin of the trou-

ble in thinking only of avenging the attack on their dignities. Instead of separating the cause of Parliament and that of the Third Estate, they confounded them in their puerile anger and in so doing made allies even of rivals whose interests were opposed, forced them together by circumstances.

The governmental and royal clumsiness reached its height that day, November 19, 1787, when the King at eight o'clock in the morning slipped into the midst of a Parliament, clandestinely convoked in the night, where Lamoignon explained his system: five years of loans totaling four hundred and twenty million, and the convocation of the States-General at the end, in 1792.

It was in this session that the Councillors were seen to arise one after another and, with emotion, call upon the King:

'Does not a deficit of one hundred and forty or one hundred and seventy millions seem sufficient?' asked Robert de Saint-Vincent. 'Why, then, is it necessary to add to it a debt of five hundred millions? . . . Your Ministers wish to avoid the States-General, for they fear its inspection. . . . The needs of the State will force you to assemble it within two years.'

And d'Épremesnil, proposing to register the first two loans and to convoke the States-General whose inspection they feared . . . 'The needs of the State will force you to assemble it within two years.'

'Sire, with one word you are going to fulfill all prayers. . . . I read in Your Majesty's expression

that this intention is in your heart, this word is on your lips; pronounce it, Sire.'

The Assembly felt the King waver, but Lamoignon held him again. Votes were not taken up, and Louis XVI said simply, 'I order that my edict be registered.'

At this moment the Duc d'Orléans, the future Philippe-Égalité, entered on the scene, protested against the session, and declared it illegal.

'It is legal, because I will it,' replied Louis XVI.

The instinctive cry of wounded despotism! 'O kings, you who grow old in a long childhood, you whom weakness rather than desire leads to tyranny, tremble . . .' Mirabeau had written in other days in his *Essai sur le despotisme.* The long childhood of Louis XVI, his weakness which led him on to tyranny, all these forerunning signs of the end had just revealed themselves in one little sentence. The acts followed the words. On the night of November 20 to 21, the Duc d'Orléans was exiled and two members of Parliament were arrested and imprisoned.

Mirabeau congratulated the banished Prince on having defended legality, and wrote to the Minister Montmorin: 'The loan is rejected . . . it could not help but be. What then must be done? Announce in precise and solemn terms that in 1789 the States-General will convene, which can no longer be dispensed with.'

In the combat which opened between despotism and the privileged classes, Mirabeau watched the strokes dispassionately, keeping for himself the

honor of having given warning, anticipating and hastening the hour when the popular urge should throw these two drunken enemies into the same abyss.

'You may be sure that my day is coming,' he wrote on September 2 to Major Mauvillon. The States-General in 1789: such from now on was his fixed idea. He felt himself in full strength. He sniffed the future. He was called 'A mad dog,' by a Paris sheet apropos of the publication of his *Correspondance avec Cerutti*, a continuation of his letters against Necker. 'A fine reason to elect me if I am a mad dog,' he wrote, 'for despotism and the privileged class will die from my bite.'

CHAPTER XVI

On the Threshold of History

'For ten months now,' one reads in a letter from Mirabeau addressed to Mauvillon on August 21, 1788, 'and especially for six, I have been the butt of all the calumnies in the world because, in conversation, I do not share the parliamentary fanaticism, and because I have not written a single line for the opposition party. In truth, I have written no more for the other side. I have always believed that between the King and the Parliament there was a poor little obscure party called the nation to which the men of good sense and good faith must belong.'

It was very true that Mirabeau heaped upon himself every unpopularity at this time. Had he not attacked the two divinities which the crowd revered: Necker and Parliament? It was in an anonymous pamphlet that he treated the latter as made up of 'the worst of all aristocracies, that of judge-legislators,' and added, 'Even when the scandal of legislative pretensions in this body have ceased, they are to be reproached for their hereditary and mercenary positions.'

But the anonymity of the pamphlet did not suffice to conceal the author of this *Réponse aux alarmes des bons citoyens*. No one even noticed that this audacious writer demanded periodic national assemblies. The date of a pamphlet changes its mean-

ing. This one appeared in May, 1788, just when the garrison invaded Parliament and the latter saw itself replaced for one day by a plenary court. It was believed to have been written to justify this *coup d'état* which, to tell the truth, Mirabeau had not foreseen at all. From this arose the rage of which he complained to Mauvillon.

And five days after this letter, August 26, 1788, Necker, recalled by the King, succeeded Brienne, and recalled the Parliament in his turn. All Mirabeau's adversaries triumphed together in the midst of a universal applause.

A month passed and these positions were reversed. Brienne, before falling, had fixed May 19, 1789, for the opening of the States-General. On September 25 the Parliament, called to pass upon it, demanded that the States should be composed 'according to the form observed in 1614,' which assured to the clergy and the nobility the majority over the Third Estate.

'Never,' wrote the author of the *Mémoires de Weber*, 'were revolutions in spirit more rapid. Never did malediction more quickly replace enthusiasm. I saw this same Parliament received in triumph on September 22 . . . covered with outrages on the 24th.'

Will the voting be done by order or individually?

'By order,' said the Parliament.

'Individually,' said Mirabeau and the nation.

Will the Third Estate obtain as many deputies as the two other orders united?

'No,' replied the Parliament.

'Yes,' replied Mirabeau and the nation.

Necker staggered under the two problems and knew no way but to unite another assembly of notables, like Calonne, to get himself out of the affair and to spare himself making a decision. It was November 3, 1788. At the end of the month the committee charged with regulating the arrangements had met only three times, to regulate nothing at all, when the Prince de Conti asked for the floor, and demanded 'that all the new systems should be forever done away with, and that the Constitution and the old forms should be maintained in their integrity.' In vain Parliament reconvened December 5, ashamed of and confused by the decree which had taken away its crown of popularity; in vain Necker pronounced both against the vote by individuals and for the doubling of the Third Estate, which appeared like the height of illogic. From hesitation to hesitation, from recantation to recantation, Necker, Parliament, and the Assembly of Notables passed pell-mell and dragged one another down the slope which led to the Revolution.

Mirabeau, during this period, refrained from writing. 'My stand is irrevocably taken to print nothing on the questions which divide us nor in general on the National Assembly, which I am sure neither of attending nor not attending, because I do not wish to give myself a single chance of being excluded from it through my own fault,' he declared on November 8, 1788, to Major Mauvillon.

His activity shut him up in the interior of the

Société des Trente which met in the rue du Grand-Chantier, in the salons of Adrien Duport, Councillor for Parliament, and where he met Talleyrand, Condorcet, Lauzun, Panchaud, La Fayette, and the Ducs de La Rochefoucault, de Luynes, and d'Aiguillon. There the candidacies were prepared, the agents for the approaching elections were hired, the tactics to be followed were defined, propaganda was nourished, and action coördinated.

'Have me elected! Have me elected!' Mirabeau thought constantly.

'Ah, M. le Duc,' he said to Lauzun, 'let us be in the States-General at any price. We will lead them and we will do great things, and we will have great enjoyment which will be worth more than all the toys of the Court.'

He had hoped for a time to get himself named either in Alsace or in Dauphiné through the influence of the government. But the animosity of Necker had paralyzed the pale good will of M. de Montmorin in his regard. Happily the publication of his four quarto volumes on *La Monarchie prussienne* which he had dedicated to the Friend of Man, had almost reconciled him with his father. 'I have not given up feeling that he has successively redeemed himself in a way,' the Marquis had already written of him on the preceding August 15. 'He has made another life for himself, thanks to which the century has come to him. . . . If this monsieur should wish to figure in the nation, he should reëstablish himself in his original province.'

This was exactly the plan that 'this monsieur' had formed, so he left on January 8, 1789, for Aix, where five days afterwards he brought about an explosion. No other word could express the effect of terror that his arrival produced on the nobility of Provence. The latter had combined with the clergy to escape the general convocation of the three orders and to choose deputies for the States-General from the bosom of the former Provençal States where the clergy was represented only by bishops and the communes by consuls whom they had not elected and where the two privileged orders overpowered in numbers the Third Estate.

Each one had the presentiment that Mirabeau's sudden appearance was going to disturb these beautiful calculations. The camps formed themselves again as at the time of the lawsuit that he had carried on against the Marignanes. 'The Third Estate pursues me with marks of confidence and enthusiasm which are very imprudent even for its cause,' he wrote on January 20 to his sister du Saillant.

The aristocratic rage against him exasperated him. 'I have never seen a body of nobility more ignorant, more greedy, and more insolent,' he wrote. 'They will make me become a deputy of the common people in spite of myself.' Meanwhile the trustees dared not refuse him entrance to the private assembly of the nobility, already in session when he came. But his adversaries believed they had found a good way to eliminate him from the States-General, that of deciding that to represent the nobility

it was not sufficient to be noble, but that one must also possess a fief. And he had none. He succeeded, however, in forcing the door of the Provençal States, and in the procession which preceded the opening on January 25 people saw him pass, walking with his hand on the hilt of his sword, the last of the order of nobility, 'in a way between the nobility and the Third Estate,' Portalis tells us. The crowd noticed this solitary man with the powerful carriage, whose enormous head of hair fell over his ears in curls and was gathered up behind his head with a black taffeta ribbon. 'His ugliness was in a way imposing,' writes the same witness. It was already known that he had demanded that the membership of the Third Estate be doubled and had been supported by only twenty-six voices against forty-eight. But the public instinct awaited some *coup de théâtre* from him.

However, the first three sessions went by without his intervening. He remained silent in his place. But on January 30 he arose, declared the assembly illegal, and demanded the regular convocation of the three orders: 'I ask you if it is just, even in the century in which we find ourselves, that two orders which do not make up the nation should have their way with the nation.' At his words the Third Estate broke out in joy and the clergy and the nobility in fury.

'He is the enemy of peace,' the gentlemen cried. 'His motion is incendiary. . . . He has come to break a concluded and sworn-to agreement.'

'He is the friend of the people,' the others replied.

The peaceable streets of Aix became alive with the people acclaiming their deputy and jeering the members of the nobility and the clergy as they came out of the assembly. These later assembled, protesting against the motion of the traitor, and, to prevent him from talking, obtained from the King's commissioner the suspension of the session until April 21.

Mirabeau carried the struggle outside, and on February 3 had his reply to the prelates and to the possessors of fiefs printed: 'In all countries, in all ages, the aristocrats have implacably pursued the friends of the people and if, by some chance of fortune, one of these has arisen in their midst, they have struck at him above all, avid as they are to inspire terror by the choice of their victim. Thus perished the last of the Gracchi at the hand of the patricians; but, stricken with his death-blow, he flung a cry from the dust into the skies calling the avenging gods to witness, and from this dust Marius was born, Marius, less great for having exterminated the Cimbrians than for having defeated the aristocracy of the nobility in Rome.'

On February 8, the nobles reassembled to revenge this supreme insult and voted the exclusion of Mirabeau under the pretext that he possessed no fief.

New reply and new reproaches from the excluded. The polemic lasted until February 15, when Mirabeau was called again to Paris by a vexatious affair.

For a little over a year a new woman had been in

his life, Mme. Le Jay, the wife of one of the booksellers associated for the publication of the treatise on *La Monarchie prussienne*. Pretty, sensual, bold on every occasion, she had taken possession of him. This little Nehra was so staid. She desired nothing. How different the other, avid for love, for money, and for glory! When Mirabeau, overwrought from a passionate day in the Polangis house which he had rented for Mme. Le Jay, returned in the evening to the little apartment in Passy where Mme. de Nehra held up to him her serene little forehead and conversed with him on her little household worries, he felt like a beast placed back in his cage and attached to a domestic animal. He compared his new mistress's passion with the coldness of this child without appetites, and said to himself that love was not, could not be the tranquil attachment of a woman with frozen senses. Loving no longer, he complained of not being loved, and carried a fury into his accusations which made them almost sincere. Each return brought on a scene until that summer day when he found the house empty. Quietly, with her sad and determined air, Mme. de Nehra had left. 'The situation,' she wrote, 'was too violent. It was more than I could bear. I felt myself dying. I made a choice, an extreme one; I left M. de Mirabeau's house on August 18 and the kingdom the next day.'

At first he did not suffer from this departure. His friends seemed sadder than himself about it. They remained grateful to her who, during four years, had been forced every day to quiet a violent soul,

and blamed Mirabeau for not having appreciated this unfailing tenderness.

The moment she was no longer there, this great man, who had never shown discretion except in politics, seemed to let go of himself. Mme. Le Jay gave him no more rest. She saw poverty coming, for her husband's affairs were in jeopardy. She communicated her torment to Mirabeau. Both chafing at restraint, both lacking money, the two lovers sought some folly to commit. Mme. Le Jay found one. Mirabeau had read to her his *Correspondance secrète* from Berlin. She conceived the idea of having it published by her husband. This publication would be the greatest of diplomatic scandals and consequently the booksellers' most beautiful success of the century; it would permit Le Jay to avoid bankruptcy and procure for Mirabeau the funds of which he had need for his election. What a sensation! Mme. Le Jay was of those women who love their lover the more for having debased him. Mirabeau was upset at first upon hearing this proposal. But he was weaker before a woman than before an insurgent mob. His mistress persuaded him by using, for a supreme argument:

'You can declare that these letters have been stolen from you.'

Thus it was done. One day Mirabeau's secretary, M. de Comps, who took care of the correspondence, found the piece of furniture broken open in which he kept it locked up. The book appeared and the King of Prussia and the principal people of the king-

dom were seen painted with their vices, their manias, and their mistresses. Prince Henry of Prussia was at the moment in Paris. He complained to Louis XVI, and the diplomatic representative of the King Frederick William II demanded prosecution from the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Parliament ordered prosecution on February 10.

Such was the scandal which made Mirabeau hurry to Paris on February 21. 'Mine is a strange destiny,' he wrote to Major Mauvillon, 'to be forever the motive power of a revolution and forever between a dunghill and a palace.'

He made haste to cry 'thief,' and, seven days later, left Paris practically reassured. His accomplices, the Le Jays, had skillfully started the rumor that the true perpetrator of the publication could very well be Beaumarchais, accused of having procured a copy of the correspondence and of having given it to the public to avenge himself for Mirabeau's attacks during their polemic on the subject of the water company. As for M. de Montmorin, he had replied to Herr von Goetz that 'never had the King and his Council so greatly desired to put an end to an affair with an arbitrary warrant,' but that they could not 'under prevailing conditions and during the present mental agitation.'

Mirabeau was to be able to judge how widely spread this agitation was upon his return to Provence. His partisans had charged the postmaster at five halting-places from Aix to send a courier to Aix to announce the arrival of 'the friend of the people.'

Upon approaching Lambesc, Mirabeau saw the municipal magistrates awaiting him at the gates of the city. They constituted themselves his escort. All the population was outside. The bells rang. Bombs burst. As he went by, there arose cries of:

'Long live the Comte de Mirabeau! Long live the father of our country!'

Mirabeau's soul melted. He wept. His years of struggle, of adventures and of prisons had hardened him to emotion. But at last he felt the immense sweetness which emanates from the love of the common people.

At Saint-Cannat the ovations were renewed. At last he approached Aix. Laborers with their arms filled with flowers came out to meet him as far as two leagues from the city. Ten thousand men came out of the city to receive him; they surrounded him and carried his carriage. In Aix the enthusiasm was still greater. He was passed from arm to arm before entering his house, into which the crowd poured to see him, to hear him, to touch him. All evening and all night there were bonfires and the sound of tambourines and flutes. The crowd betook itself from his dwelling to that of the Marignanes and addressed Provençal harangues to the Comtesse de Mirabeau, adjuring her to return to her husband.

'Your race is too good to be allowed to die out.'

On March 18 he went to Marseilles. There one hundred and twenty thousand men acclaimed him. Windows were rented for two louis to see him pass. Palms, branches of laurel and of olive were thrown

to him. People kissed the wheels of his vehicle. Women held out their children toward him. The house where he stopped was decorated with the flags from all the vessels anchored in the port. He looked, listened, saluted and thought of the Château d'If, so near there, where not fifteen years ago a man indicted and accused of assassination had entered into captivity.

Five days passed and Marseilles was in revolution. A starving crowd invaded the city hall and demanded the reduction of the price of bread and of meat. Municipal officers yielded. Trumpets announced throughout the city that bread, instead of being three and a half sous a pound, would cost only two sous, and that meat would be six sous instead of eight and nine. But the people of Marseilles were unleashed. They hunted down the mayor and obliged him to escape by the roofs, then went after his assessor, then after the subdelegate of the commissaire. Finally they pillaged the house of the commissaire, M. de La Tour. The next day they went on to that of the farmer-general of the city, M. Rebuffel, and gathered around the storehouses of wheat to pillage them.

Mirabeau then arrived, having been called back from Aix. The military commander in Provence, M. de Caraman, was beside himself and gave him a free hand. 'What can I advise you, M. le Comte?' he had written to him. 'Do what your heart and your power dictate to you for the public good. It is truly a decisive moment.'

'*Your power.*' Thus the representative of royalty abdicated before the new power, that of eloquence. Immediately Mirabeau threw himself into responsibility. It was the young people who had demanded him. He gathered them together and in a few hours created by his sole authority a bourgeois militia which he put to guarding the bakery shops, the stores of wheat, and the warehouses. Then he calculated that the reduction promised in the price of bread was going to cost the municipal treasury ten to twelve thousand livres a day, and concluded that the administration would become impossible, that the country would pour in on the city to profit by the advantages acquired by the citizens, and that at the end of a few days there would be no bread. On the 26th he had posted an *Avis de Mirabeau au peuple de Marseille*, in which he took it upon himself to exhort the population to a reasonable raise in price. Marseilles became calm and obeyed.

Aix now revolted. There were dead and wounded both in the population and in the garrison. M. de Caraman had had his sword broken, and his son and he had been hit with stones. He called for aid. Mirabeau hurried to Aix and, from the back of his horse, preached peace. Up and down the streets, he answered for 'the goodness of the King as well as the beneficent intentions of his Ministers.' They listened to him, they believed him, they kissed his hand. Order was reëstablished even more quickly than in Marseilles.

Elections came around. They lasted from April

3 to 9. Mirabeau received two hundred and ninety votes out of three hundred and forty-four in Aix. He led the deputies of the Third Estate. He came out as the fourth in Marseilles. He chose Aix. And he had entered history.

CHAPTER XVII

The Founder of the Liberty of the Press

On May 4, 1789, the daughter and the wife of the two principal Ministers of the monarchy, Mmes. de Staël and de Montmorin, looking from the same window at Versailles, one with fright, the other with enthusiasm, watched the procession of twelve hundred deputies of France going to the opening mass of the States-General.

Immediately behind the Franciscan friars and the city clergy, marching in file in two parallel lines, came the six hundred unknowns, representatives of the Third Estate, who seemed to be made still more anonymous by their humble cloaks of black wool, imposed by etiquette.

Suddenly Mme. de Staël trembled. She had just seen the only one among them who was recognizable, her father's enemy, Mirabeau. 'His great head of hair distinguished him from all the others. . . . Even his homeliness gave his face strength and his whole person gave the idea of irregular power, but nevertheless a power such as one would expect in a deputy of the people,' she has related in her *Considérations sur la révolution française.* Long after he had disappeared, when the nobility with its white plumes had already filed by, as well as the order of the Church in its pomp, the Holy Sacrament on its dais, the King with his indifferent air, the Queen with her

beautiful terrified face, Mme. de Staël continued to see this extraordinary man and dreamed of Hercules lighting his funeral pile.

Meanwhile the ceremony began in the church of Saint Louis. Mirabeau trembled with impatience. Two days before, he had taken account of the incurable stupidity of the councillors of the monarchy, when, after three long hours of waiting in his row, he had seen that, during the reception of the deputies by the King, both sides of the door had been opened for the nobility and the clergy and one side shut for the passage of the Third Estate. These differences in consideration and in costume, in fact, in everything, indicated that the resolution was made to separate the three orders and humiliate the Third Estate, which, however, those in power would have done well to take for point of support, since the salvation of the finances demanded the abolition of privileges and equality in the matter of taxation. Now, from the height of the pulpit, Monseigneur de La Fare, Bishop of Nancy, delivered his sermon. If only Bossuet could have known such a day, or even Bourdaloue! No, only this fashionable bishop presided, who was mildly a demagogue and a good enough fellow made to please Louis XVI: 'Sire, receive the homage of the clergy, the respect of the nobility, and . . . the very humble supplications of the Third Estate.' Always this distinction between the castes!

Upon going out, Mirabeau hurried to bring up to date the first number of his *Journal des États-*

Généraux, which was to appear that very evening. He judged in it the bit of religious eloquence that he had just heard delivered: 'Never has a more beautiful occasion been more completely lost.' In the same number, he enumerated with courage and judgment the mistakes already committed by the Ministry and the Court, which were of a nature to compromise the holding of the States-General. He took pity on the solemn naïveté of those who believed themselves stopping the popular movement by opposing to it the barrier of a protocol.

The appearance of the *Journal des États-Généraux* was like an alarm bell announcing the liberty of the press. Up to that time only the *Mercure de France* and the *Journal de Paris* had enjoyed, through the tolerance of the censorship, the privilege of printing sweetened stories according to the custom of a nation authorized to instruct itself in almost everything but politics. Mirabeau had known another form of journalism in London and conceived the idea of popularizing it in France. With the circumspection then necessary, he had even attempted this upon his return from England by putting out a publication with the prudent but not very seductive title: *Analyse de papiers anglais*. The events which had begun to take place soon had distracted him from so timid an enterprise.

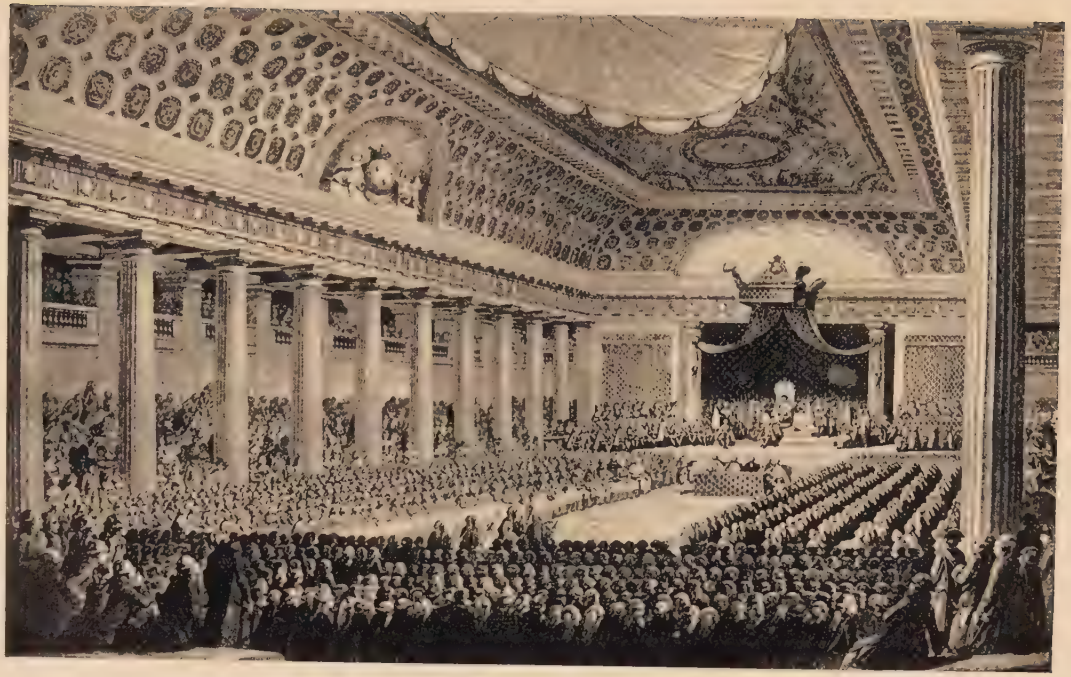
At last the moment had come, according to his view, not only to demand the liberty of opinion, but to found it by a stroke of audacity. That is why, on the eve of the meeting of the States-General, without

having taken the trouble to ask authorization from any one whatsoever, he launched his journal. It pleased him to enter into direct communication with the public even before raising his voice before the deputies, for he had always thought that political action lacked scope when it was shut up in the interior of an assembly and that the double propaganda of the tongue and the pen was needed to develop it.

His leaflet having appeared, the Ministers and the courtiers denounced it to the King as a criminal attempt against his sovereignty. What would they come to if such customs became habitual? The States-General had begun well!

The next morning, May 5, Mirabeau arrived at eight o'clock in the morning with the other deputies of the Third Estate at the Salle des Menus-Plaisirs, reserved for the States-General. While the Master of Ceremonies made them wait at the back door, calling them one by one according to the order of the bailiwicks of 1614, the clergy and the nobility passed in by the front door. From outside Mirabeau heard the noise of applause. It was Necker and then the Duc d'Orléans whom they acclaimed. At last his name rang out. He entered. Murmurs and hisses. He held up his head, looked the audience over from one end to the other, passed through the nobility and the clergy, and went to take his place with the Third Estate in the back of the room.

On two sides of the rectangular Salle des Menus-Plaisirs the guests of the Court framed in the



OPENING OF THE STATES-GENERAL AT VERSAILLES, MAY 5, 1789
From an old print

deputies and almost smothered them. Yet hours passed. At last Louis XVI appeared. He came to the center of the platform and was greeted with great cries of 'Long live the King,' which were renewed with almost each phrase of his short discourse. Not a single 'Long live the Queen.' Marie Antoinette seemed to be crying. His address finished, the King reseated himself on his throne and covered his head. The gentlemen imitated him, affirming in this way an historic right. Immediately Mirabeau put on his hat. A number of the deputies of the Third Estate did the same. The nobility turned around, furious at this assumption of equality. Fortunately the King then uncovered his head. The incident was over in the wink of an eye, just sufficient time to see the storm gather.

After the discourse by M. de Barentin, Keeper of the Seals, delivered in a 'stupid voice,' Necker rose. 'They were drunk with applauding,' stated Mirabeau in his second number of the *Journal des États-Généraux*, 'and went on applauding until they were satiated.' Necker commenced to read. He read for three hours and was obliged to have himself relieved by an unknown Broussonet, the secretary, it seemed, of an agricultural society. The enthusiasm wore itself out, boredom commenced, and Mirabeau discovered this unheard-of phenomenon under an absolute monarchy: the government was totally and irrevocably insolvent.

The kingdom had just been moved to its foundations. People cried out with poverty and with hope.

After an interruption of one hundred and seventy-five years, the States-General was again convened. Why? One would say that the Ministry did not know. The Third Estate had obtained as many deputies as the two other orders united. This signified at least that the representatives of twenty-five million men would balance those of two hundred and seventy thousand of the privileged classes. The Director-General of Finances did not permit this to be hoped. Would there be three assemblies or one, one nation or castes? Do not ask Necker. His system was to let every one do as he liked in order not to discontent any one. It was not France that he was trying to save, it was his popularity.

He had not finished speaking when Mirabeau stood up. He was going to ask: 'Sire, should the orders be separated or remain together?' His discourse was entirely written out in his pocket. Had Louis XVI seen his move? At any rate, he rose and went away. The session was finished. It was 4.30 o'clock in the afternoon.

Mirabeau hurried to write, since it had not been possible for him to talk: 'Let us hope that the Minister of Finances will understand at last that there is no longer time to maneuver; that the current of public opinion will be irresistible, that it is necessary to go along with it or to be submerged . . . supported by unheard-of popularity, he has nothing to fear but the desertion of his own cause . . .'

Weak governments imagine that repression will spare them the necessity of having a programme.

The next day, May 6, a decree from the Council prohibited the publication of journals and periodicals printed without authority. The day after a new decree of the Council was directed especially at Mirabeau, condemning his journal as 'abusive' and ordering that the copies already published be brought 'to the record office of the Council to be suppressed.'

But the decrees of the Council aroused public opinion and rallied it to the cause of Mirabeau. On May 8, the electors of the Third Estate of the city of Paris, gathered together for the editing of their records, voted, on the motion of Target, a unanimous protest 'against the decree of the Council suppressing the *Journal des États-Généraux* and forbidding the continuation . . . in that it violated the liberty of the press which was claimed by all of France. . . .' The order of nobility adhered to the protestation, attenuating somewhat the terms. On May 10, the *Journal des États-Généraux* reappeared under the title *Lettres du Comte de Mirabeau à ses commettants*, and took up again the recital of events from the moment that it had been interrupted. Now there was open strife.

The police went to the printers armed with a search warrant and seized the copies and the presses. The excitement swelled and reached the Assembly. Parliament, called to the help of the Ministry, excused itself and declared 'that there was nothing to deliberate about.' On May 19, the government, renounced by the magistrates, yielded. Immediately

Mirabeau had twenty imitators. Each day in June saw a new sheet blossom out. The liberty of the press was founded. Mirabeau and the Revolution had just won their first victory. Fifteen days had sufficed.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Revolution

Now the deputies of the Third Estate the morning after the royal session did not find either the nobility or the clergy present upon their return into the great Salle des Menus-Plaisirs. The two privileged orders, not being able even to support the accomplishment of the simple formality of verification of powers in common, had shut themselves into two adjacent halls; they deliberated separately there, and almost behind closed doors. The Third Estate remained alone. No, not alone! Face to face with the crowd.

In the first moment of disorder there seemed two publics looking at one another, each awaiting from the other the word which neither possessed. The monarchy which had the prestige? Absent! The government which had the popularity? Absent! The nobility who knew how to command? Absent. The clergy who knew how to instruct? Absent. This principal portion of the Assembly floundered in all directions as though trying to join the others from which it had been cut off. More than five hundred deputies were present and seized with the stupor of the freed who do not know what to do with their liberty and cry out against it without taking cognizance of each other.

Nothing distinguished one from another. Their

names were obscure, their costumes uniform, and their positions on the same level on the floor, for it was only at the end of June that Bailly ordered that a platform be erected and organized that hemicycle demanded by Mirabeau since the first day. The barrier which separated them from the audience was so slight that the spectators mingled with the representatives. Mirabeau profited by this to consult with his secretaries.

During a calm moment at the end of half an hour of tumult, he threw out:

'Let us name a president.'

'No, no, not a president! We, also, would seem to be establishing ranks among ourselves.'

'A dean!'

'Yes. Very well . . . who is the eldest member? . . .'

'I,' said Leroux, former mayor of Amiens.

They believed him. A committee on seniority was established. Motions followed one another.

'Every one wishing, *à la Française*, to be heard before listening,' as Mirabeau was to write that evening, there was only the confused noise of successive interruptions, into which the word 'privileged' entered continually, pronounced in an angry accent.

'Let us do without them. Let us constitute a National Assembly!' exclaimed Mirabeau.

'Oh!'

The hall suddenly was scandalized. The majority, the great majority feared above all to assume

the initiative of a rupture. The common people were still timid and in the depths of their souls respectful of acquired rights.

Mounier, deputy from Grenoble, known for the part he had taken the year before in the movement in Dauphiné and at the meeting of Vizille, was applauded when he proposed to wait, to decide nothing, and explained that 'the art of doing everything is to do nothing at all.'

Malouet, the friend of Necker, climbed on a bench and demanded that they send a deputation to negotiate with the superior orders.

'Yes.'

'No.'

They could not decide. Every one grew weary. After a thousand fruitless proposals, they adjourned until the next day.

Coming out of this 'chaos' Mirabeau felt edified on the impotence of these men who had purposes, ambitions, passions, but no plan: a band without a leader. What other leader than himself? Had he not once said to Lauzun, now become Biron, 'M. le Duc, we will lead the States-General'? We, that is to say, I. It did not concern the duke. Neither that man nor the others. In order to lead, he had to think, to talk, to write. Who, then, in this assembly, except Mirabeau, had at once a brain, a tongue, a pen, and a plan?

He alone knew what he wanted. In the first place, he wished to make of the Assembly of Deputies of the Third Estate the true, the only Assembly,

that to which the other orders would have to rally under threat of disappearance. Already the adversaries of the Third Estate had committed the mistake of abandoning to it the large hall, where there were galleries, where the public could enter, the 'National Hall' as they had begun to call it. They had only to install themselves there and deliberate, without worrying about the aristocrats and the priests who had imprisoned themselves. Was it not one of the favorite maxims of Mirabeau that to make themselves formidable the people had only to remain immovable?

After having made the cause of France and that of the Assembly one, he wished to become the incarnation of that Assembly. Such was the second part of the programme which Mirabeau drew up. Toward this end he would exercise the double influence of public opinion and eloquence. He would have a journal: *Journal des États-Généraux*, *Lettres à mes commettants*, *Courrier de Provence*, were but different names with which he baptized his exterior propaganda. He prepared himself to intervene on all subjects during the sessions of the Assembly, making use of excellent collaborators whom he had the art to discover: Dumont, Duroveray, Clavière, Reybaz, Pellenc, and others. He gave four or five addresses in May, seven or eight in June, twenty in July, as many in August, as many in September, and almost one hundred and twenty addresses between the beginning and the end of the States-General of 1789.

Toward what end was all this? Toward the

representative régime, toward a revolution, not against the monarchy, but within the monarchy. Mirabeau was not at all an ideologue. As orator, he borrowed his similes from history; as politician, he drew his plans from reality. Not having seen the true republican ideal flower as yet except in little Switzerland and new America, he did not think to establish it in an old and great country which, after all, had known more than one dynasty and practiced more than one system under the invariable insignia of royalty. Louis XVI had only to become one of the people as Henry IV had made himself Catholic. France was well worth one person's liberty!

Without doubt Louis XVI was not Henry IV, and would not find within him the strength to ally himself with the nation against the privileged classes. Very well; this transformation of the State would be imposed upon him by an all-powerful minister, capable of reconciling the past and the future through his aristocratic traditions and plebeian instincts. At this point in his reasoning Mirabeau marveled how much the picture of such a minister resembled himself.

Unfortunately the King and Queen despised him, Necker hated him, the aristocracy branded him with the name of 'renegade,' and the Third Estate suspected him of being only an aristocrat. So much the worse! He would impose himself on all, and it would be he, the interdict, the former prisoner of the Île de Ré, of the Château d'If, of the Fort de Joux, of the Dungeon of Vincennes, and he, who had once been

condemned to death at Pontarlier, who would go down in history as the only statesman of his time.

It was the nobility which was the enemy, the enemy of the people and of the King, the enemy of France, and the enemy of Mirabeau himself. It was able to keep its prestige over the bourgeois of the Assembly. But precisely because he had come from it, he knew the faults of this frivolous and ignorant caste, given over to a puerile admiration of itself, to the lazy contempt for realities, and to considering everything a game: politics, war, and revolution. First of all and at all cost, it must be reduced to impotence, and, to that end, it must be isolated from the monarchy, from the Third Estate, even from the clergy, and if it could be done, from the Ministry.

Then, as the Assembly continued to discuss whether or not it would organize itself, whether or not it would await the other orders, whether or not it should send a conciliatory envoy to them, Mirabeau proposed to disregard the aristocracy and to apply to the only clergy who would understand, the humble curates bound to the Third Estate by common origin and common poverty as well as to the prelates who profited on their livings. A clever suggestion, too clever to be understood! Only one voice echoed the motion of the deputy from Aix, that of the deputy from Artois, who spoke this day for the first time: Robespierre. The Third Estate, in spite of these men, decided on May 18 to appeal to the two superior orders at one time.

Defeated before the Assembly, resigned to letting the sixteen delegates named by it engage in a negotiation which he foresaw as without issue, Mirabeau decided to attempt to gain over Necker to his plan. He sought out Malouet, the reasonable Malouet, whom all the world knew to be the friend of the Ministers, and who had acted in the Assembly as an adversary of Mirabeau.

'Monsieur,' he said to him, 'you are, I know, one of the rational friends of liberty, and I also; you are frightened by the storms which are piling up, I am no less. . . . I know that you are the friend of M. de Montmorin and M. Necker who make up almost all the Council of the King. I do not like either of them, and I don't suppose that they have any taste for me; but it's of small importance whether we like one another if we can understand one another. So, I desire to know their viewpoints, and I address myself to you in order to obtain a conference with them. They would be very guilty or very short-sighted, in fact the King himself would not be excusable, if he tried to reduce this States-General to the same termination, to the same results, as all the others have had. This will not turn out that way.'

Moreover, he declared himself ready to support the Ministry if they could agree on the means and the end to be pursued. 'If, on the contrary, the government tries to play with us, it will find me in the breach.'

Malouet took account of the strength of the help offered, hurried to the Ministers and found them full

of superiority and repugnance. Montmorin reproached Mirabeau for his past; Necker said nothing and looked at the ceiling according to his habit. Malouet insisted, argued, and Necker yielded at last:

'Let us do it,' he said. 'I want to very much. We will find out his scheme and his conditions.'

The appointment was arranged for the next day at eight o'clock in the morning.

Mirabeau arrived and found a solemn and puffed-up Necker who greeted him haughtily without a word. This mute haughtiness irritated him. He said nothing. The silence grew longer between the two men. Mirabeau made an effort:

'Monsieur, M. Malouet has assured me that you have understood and approved of the motives of the explanation that I want to have with you.'

Necker's face grew more and more glacial, more and more reserved:

'Monsieur,' replied the Minister, 'M. Malouet told me that you had propositions to make to me. What are they?'

At the word 'propositions' Mirabeau rose, red with anger. Then this imbecile believed that he had come to sell himself.

'My proposition is to wish you good-day,' he exclaimed. He went out, slamming the door. A little later, in the Assembly, Malouet saw that he was flushed and heard him say as he bestrode his bench:

'Your man is a blockhead. He will hear from me.'

By May 25, the conferences between the envoys

from the three orders had brought forth nothing. The stubbornness of the nobility prevented any reconciliation. Mirabeau rose and declared that it was time for the Assembly to organize itself. Mounier opposed it:

'I cannot bring myself to the present opinion of M. le Comte de Mirabeau . . .'

He was interrupted.

'I might observe,' said the interrupter, 'that ranks and dignities ought not to be continually repeated in an assembly of equal men.'

'I attach so little importance to my title of Comte that I give it to whoever wishes it,' retorted Mirabeau.

Four hundred and thirty-six voices against eleven approved his resolution. This day marked the date of his first success and that of the emancipation of the Third Estate.

On the twenty-seventh, a deputy from Dauphiné took up again the idea of an attempt at conciliation with the clergy. Mirabeau supported it. The Assembly had had time to understand the maneuver which had frightened it ten days before. It rallied to it.

Necker, the Court, and the King became frightened. Louis XVI wrote a letter to the three orders in which he invited them to take up their conferences again in the presence of the Keeper of the Seals. The Assembly hesitated, suspecting a trap: 'A trap if we defer to the wishes of the King, a trap if we refuse,' Mirabeau exclaimed. 'Let us set our course

between these two reefs,' and he demanded that a report of the official proceedings should be prepared in common after each conference by the envoys of the three orders and an address be made to the King 'in which we shall gain sanction both for our feelings and our principles.' No one asked for the floor after him. They followed him almost blindly. The Assembly adopted a resolution which reproduced his discourse even to the words. It recognized Mirabeau for its guide. One month had not passed, however, since he had been hissed at the opening of the States-General.

He had succeeded in imposing himself by the sureness, the precision, and the authoritativeness of his views and not, as has so often been said, by the power of his voice. Legend has been pleased to represent him in the aspect of the Samson, whose lion's mane he did have, crushing with his gesture the Philistines, shaking columns and rolling out a long thunder of oratory over the Assembly. The truth is, he had a harmonious voice, 'silver' one of his contemporaries has said, more modulated than powerful, more moving than of wide compass. He talked and his motionless body seemed to burn with an interior flame which communicated its heat little by little to the souls of the hearers; his eloquence was nothing but movement, a movement, however, in the depths rather than on the surface.

By June 10 the conferences of conciliation had decidedly conciliated no one, in spite of royal objurga-

tions, the presence of the Keeper of the Seals, and the personal intervention of Necker. The nobility isolated itself more and more from the other orders, walling itself up in its vanity, and condemning the States-General to impotence for five weeks. France began to grow restless. The hour had come to 'break the cable.'

'Messieurs,' said Mirabeau at the opening of the session of June 10, 'the communes cannot any longer defer making a decision without exposing themselves to the gravest danger. I am informed that a member of the deputation from Paris has a motion of the greatest importance to propose.'

And he indicated the Abbé Sieyès.

One of the traits of Mirabeau's genius was this art of placing to the fore the man who was needed at the moment when he was needed. He did not at all resemble those leaders who wish to do everything and to say everything themselves and finish by suffocating their party under their weight. He loved to admire. He had been the first to praise the talent of Barnave, whom they soon sought to put against him. To-day he urged forward Sieyès, who seemed qualified because of his pamphlet on the Third Estate and his dogmatism.

'. . . The Assembly has decided that it can no longer wait upon the inaction of the privileged classes without making itself guilty toward the nation which certainly has a right to exact of it a better employment of its time . . .' said the Abbé in his doctoral tone. Applause arose from all sides. They

decided to address a last summons to the nobility and to the clergy to come into the hall of the States and, if the two privileged orders continued to abstain, to proceed without them to the roll call of the bailiwicks. On the twelfth at seven o'clock in the evening, Bailly was named provisional president and the roll call commenced with the Seneschal's Court of Agen.

'Gentlemen of the clergy . . .'

No one presented himself.

'Gentlemen of the nobility . . .'

No one presented himself.

'Gentlemen of the Third Estate . . .'

The deputies filed past and took on their powers again. The next day the Assembly was organized. Nothing was lacking but a name. On June 15, Sieyès proposed that of 'Assembly of Known and Verified Representatives of the French Nation,' and Mirabeau that of 'Assembly of the Representatives of the People.' The first name seemed too long and too cold. The second was considered too humiliating. In vain Mirabeau took the floor three times to justify himself.

He appeared more nervous than usual during this several days' debate. This was because he was suffering from fever. At this hour when his triumph was at last taking shape, the illness that had attacked him formerly in prison and again in February, 1788, awakened anew. His speech borrowed from his suffering an accent of singular passion:

'Representatives of the people, deign to respond!

Are you going to say to your constituents that you have refused this name of the people? That, if you have not blushed for them, you have, however, sought to elude this denomination which does not seem brilliant enough to you, that a more pompous title is necessary for you than that which they have conferred on you?'

The Assembly could stand no more and broke into protestations. Mirabeau had reached the limit of his strength this June 16.

Having returned to his home ill, he wrote to his friend, Major Mauvillon, enclosing also the day's letter to his constituents:

'You will find here my motion, which was not other than this: to declare ourselves "Representatives of the French People"; that is to say, what we incontestably are, what no one can prevent us from being.' And this apt tongue, this truly magic tongue which lent itself to everything and alarmed no one, reduced the great discussion to these very simple terms: Are the French people, or the one hundred thousand individuals who pretend to be a caste apart, to give laws to the French people?

'They did not wish it, and even should the greatest luck prevail, and that take place which I do not believe possible — that is, that the King give his sanction to the new name — the fact will remain that they have gambled the kingdom in a game of thirty and forty while I have disputed for it with a hand of chess in which I was the stronger.'

One can judge by these few phrases the prudence

with which Mirabeau made his plans and how he left nothing to chance.

But the time for prudence was past. The revolutionary torrent rose over the dikes and carried wise men and fools away pell-mell. On the seventeenth, the deputies of the Third Estate declared themselves to be the National Assembly. On the nineteenth, the parliamentary tumult began in the assembly of the nobility where the forty-seven who wished to reunite the orders were treated as deserters and took sword in hand. The same day one hundred and forty-nine voices of the clergy, a majority, decided to rally to the chamber of the Third Estate. Upon going out the curates threw themselves crying into the arms of the people. On June 20, finding the doors of their hall guarded by troops, the deputies of the Third Estate invaded the Jeu de Paume, swore 'never to separate and to reassemble wherever the circumstances made it necessary until the Constitution was established and affirmed on a solid basis.'

Next came the royal session of June 23 when Louis XVI read three speeches and, in the midst of remote promises which were not even listened to, proclaimed the maintenance of the feudal régime and distinction between the orders. There was loud applause from the gentlemen and the bishops, to whom Mirabeau cried several times.

'Quiet down! Quiet down!'

It seemed that his remarks for that day were to limit themselves to that. Louis XVI finished with these words, spoken in a harsh voice: 'I order you to

MIRABEAU AND THE MARQUIS DE DREUX-BREZÉ
Painting by Eugène Delacroix

separate immediately and to gather to-morrow each in the chamber intended for your order, there to take up again your sessions. In consequence I order that the Master of Ceremonies have the halls prepared.' Then, upon this remark which might have come from a furniture mover, he departed with the sounding of trumpets. The nobility and the clergy followed him. The Third Estate remained there, silent, without moving, watching the feet of the soldiers, uncertain whether they would be chased away or imprisoned.

Suddenly the Marquis de Dreux-Brezé entered with his hat on his head. The indignant deputies shouted at him to take off his hat. The Grand Master of Ceremonies replied with a word which Cambronne would later have envied him. Then, taking a hold upon himself:

'Messieurs,' he said, 'you have heard the intentions of the King . . .'

It was then that Mirabeau leaped up:

'Yes, monsieur,' he cried in a clear voice, 'Yes, monsieur, we have heard the intentions that have been suggested to the King. But you who are not his mouthpiece to the States-General, you who have no place, no voice, no right to talk, it is not for you to remind us of his address. However, in order to avoid all equivocation and all delay, I declare to you that if they have charged you with making us get out of here, you had better ask orders to use force, for we will not leave our places except by the power of the bayonet.'

An immense applause ratified this speech. M. de Dreux-Brezé, nonplussed, turned toward President Bailly:

'I cannot recognize in M. de Mirabeau other than the deputy from the bailiwick of Aix and not the mouthpiece of the Assembly.'

'Monsieur,' Bailly said slowly, 'the Assembly was adjourned after the royal session. I cannot disperse it without its having deliberated.'

'Is this really your reply and shall I give it to the King?'

'Yes, monsieur.'

The Marquis went out and the deputies moved closer to each other, feeling the catastrophe approaching.

Already the Grand Master had joined His Majesty, had told him of the resistance of the Third Estate:

'They wish to stay!' said Louis XVI, who seemed stunned. And, after a moment's hesitation: 'Bah! Let them stay!'

The Revolution had begun.

In the eyes of the common people, who need to incarnate facts in men, the Revolution came to take on the face, the gesture, and the voice of Mirabeau.

CHAPTER XIX

Vain Prophecy

'It is thus that kings are led to the scaffold,' said Mirabeau on the day after the royal session of June 23, 1789, to Dumont, of Geneva, who hands the prophetic words down to us.

Unlike all great sovereigns, Louis XVI had taken the part of the nobility against the nation, being docile to the advice of Marie Antoinette and her court, and was now condemned to carry the burden of the aristocrats' unpopularity. And he had not even shown that he knew his own mind well enough to dissolve the Assembly when it had revolted against his authority. All this passed through Mirabeau's mind. He saw what would be the consequences of this silly weakness, even the final consequence, and, not being able to believe that the royal blindness could continue, awaited an awakening either of intelligence or anger.

Once again, on July 1, he tried to convince the monarchy that it should come back to the people: 'Will the aristocracy ever cease to be the enemy of the throne? Is not its whole ambition to break down authority?' he asked in a summary for an address to the King, which, however, the Assembly did not vote upon and scarcely heard, so tired and weak was his voice that day.

The Court then dreamed of revenge and believed

that it was preparing it by reassembling the garrisons around Paris and Versailles under the orders of the Maréchal de Broglie. The officers flattered themselves openly that they would soon throw 'all this bumptious crowd in the States-General out of the window.'

In his lodging in the rue de l'Orangerie, Mirabeau expected from one hour to another to be arrested. One evening, toward midnight, he heard a dull marching in the street. He opened his window and saw Swiss and German regiments taking possession of the city.

On July 8, he mounted the rostrum to denounce these preparations for civil war, consisting of thirty-five thousand men stationed between Paris and Versailles, twenty thousand on the road, blocked passages and roads, bridges and promenades changed into military posts. He was acclaimed, and asked to deliver an address demanding the retirement of the troops, upon which he raised up a veritable monument of foresight and political discretion, unveiling the dangers which the mobilization presented.

Danger in the provinces, alarmed for their liberty: 'The distance . . . doubles their anxiety, sharpens it, envenoms it'; as a matter of fact, agitation had begun from Provence to Normandy, forerunning 'the great fear' which was to shake the cities and the country at the end of July.

Danger for the capital: 'The presence of troops will kindle resentment and produce a universal fermentation, and the first act of violence performed under the

pretext of policing may start a horrible succession of misfortunes.' On July 12, a cry from Camille Desmoulins was in truth to suffice: 'I have just arrived from Versailles. M. de Necker has been dismissed. This dismissal is the alarm bell for a Saint Bartholomew of patriots,' and a charge of the Lambesc dragoons in the place Louis XV was to let loose the people, who, on the morning of the fourteenth, threw themselves on the cannons and the guns of the Invalides before assaulting the Bastille and planting the heads of Launay and Flesselles in the garden of the Palais-Royal.

Danger for the troops: 'French soldiers, close to the center of disturbance, are participating in the passions as well as the interests of the people and can forget the pledge which makes them soldiers to remember that nature makes them men.' Mirabeau was not deceived as to the attitude of the army. Had not a young officer, Louis-Sauveur de Chénier, brother of the great poet, published a pamphlet in June entitled *Lettre à M. le Comte de Mirabeau, l'un des représentants à l'Assemblée nationale, sur les dispositions naturelles, nécessaires et indubitables des officiers et des soldats français et étrangers*, which carried the promise and the programme of military insurrection? Had not the regiment of French guards, to whom the policing of Paris was confided, piled out of their barracks pell-mell during the last days of this same month of June to run with the crowd and shout at the Palais-Royal: 'Long live the Third Estate! Long live the Nation!'

Yes, danger had come to the army, Paris, France, and the Assembly: 'The fear of appearing weak may sweep people beyond their object,' confessed Mirabeau, who already knew parliamentary psychology; 'we shall be obsessed with violent counsels while calm reason and tranquil wisdom do not give forth their oracles in the midst of tumults, disorders, and mutinous scenes.' But the most terrible danger was for the throne: 'Great revolutions have been caused by much less striking circumstances. More than one enterprise fatal to nations has announced itself in a less sinister and a less formidable manner.'

All the story of the days which were approaching was written in advance in these lines of flashing genius, to which Louis XVI, determined to lose his crown, knew no better than to reply on July 11 with the derisive proposition of transporting the Assembly to Soissons or to Noyon.

Reason could do no more. Convulsions of fear now shook the whole kingdom. The Court was frightened, the Assembly was frightened, the people were frightened. All these fears incensed one another, armed themselves against one another and threw themselves in front of one another. Mounier was right to cry out: 'There is no longer a King, Parliament, army or police.' Every one lost control of himself. The regiments disbanded, the Comte d'Artois fled, the Maréchal de Broglie fled, the Keeper of the Seals Barentin fled, the Polignacs fled, the King was to go to Paris and capitulate, the heads of Foulon and of Bertier drooped at the end

of pikes, villages burned their châteaux, wheat disappeared from the markets, the cry of 'brigands! brigands!' ran through the towns besieged by panic and hunger.

Mirabeau alone kept his head in the midst of this universal giddiness in which people passed from wild menaces to worse abandonments, from embraces to fits of rage, from outrages to crises of tears. He was not seen at the Hôtel de Ville on the day when Bailly crowned Louis XVI with a cockade, nor even at the Assembly on that night of August 4 which witnessed the greatest public subscription in history, when the privileged classes sacrificed their privileges that they had come to defend with the elegance of people accustomed to ruining themselves, when they suddenly took pride in surpassing one another in generosity, throwing all their fortunes on the table as they would in gambling at a great festival.

In his eyes, these were only 'orgies.' The word is his.

'You see what our French are like,' he said to Dumont. 'They spend an entire month disputing syllables and then in a night they throw over the whole former order of the monarchy.'

Certainly when the hour of regret came, when certain ones sought on August 10 to save the tithe, and on September 18 to hinder the promulgation of the decrees of August 4, he harshly opposed it: 'To go back on these articles,' he said, 'is an act that is equally irregular, impolitic, and impossible.' But much as he was determined to lay hold upon the

thing attained, just so much his constructive mind refused to count upon the force of a passionate outburst of destruction for the founding of a new order.

Revolution, for him, was the Constitution.

The kingdom had neither Constitution nor code. Laws were needed. 'Bring back to life the executive power, regenerate the royal authority and reconcile it with national authority' — such was his aim.

The abolition of the feudal system;

Taxation agreed upon by the nation;

The establishment of ministerial responsibility;

The liberty of the press;

Religious freedom;

A single chamber, the decisions of which must receive royal sanction in order to be obligatory;

Elected municipal officials —

These were the principal foundations of the constitutional system that he intended to establish in order 'to pass from a state of legitimate insurrection to the lasting peace of a true social state.'

He did not permit himself to improvise. 'We are not at all,' he said, 'savages arriving on the banks of the Orinoco to found a society. We are an old nation, without doubt too old for our epoch. We have a preëxisting government, a preëxisting King, and preexisting prejudices. We must bring as much as possible of all these things out of the Revolution and thus prevent too sudden a transition.'

These were exceedingly reasonable views for a time given over to passion. The Assembly let Mirabeau develop them as circumstances permitted;

it often followed his leadership, and allowed him free scope in consideration of his eloquence. However, when this enormous head with its aureole of hair was seen on the rostrum, more striking revelations were hoped for and the Assembly longed to see him bring the heavens down to earth. This was what the people wished who leaned over the Assembly from the height of the galleries and breathed into it their fervor for a new evangel, for the paradise promised to the poor and the simple of heart. If only the great deputy might satisfy this expectation of the Messiah! In this hope he was named committee reporter for the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

The great disillusionment came on August 17. Mirabeau read the nineteen articles of his bill for the Declaration of Rights. Nothing but that? The Assembly was disconcerted. Mirabeau became aware that he had lost his footing on the heights, in that cold region of eternal principle where he did not move at ease as he did on the ground. He asked that they adjourn the Declaration of Rights until after the vote on the Constitution. What! Were they to draw back, to awake from the dream which for weeks had enraptured their imaginations? They jeered the faltering prophet.

The address, in which he defended the absolute veto of the King with arguments borrowed from the Marquis de Cazaux, was still more badly received on September 1. Mirabeau had decidedly entered into a contest with the Assembly.

The combat did not at all discourage him. He was

there each day like a soldier at his post, participating without respite in the incredibly hard work on the Constitution during these months, neglecting no detail, intervening sometimes with a simple formula around which the discussion crystallized. Those men who did not like him felt themselves dependent on him against their will, and even when they resisted him, they could not do without his opinion. He had never appeared stronger than in this hour when a repressed movement of collective revolt began against him.

However, at the end of a session in the middle of this month of September, his colleagues saw him pale. A curate, deputy from Gien, had come to him:

'What, M. l'Abbé Vallet is sitting on the Left to-day!' Mirabeau said, astonished.

The priest held out a letter to him:

'From Dr. Ysabeau,' he said simply.

Mirabeau tore open the envelope feverishly. The doctor announced to him that Sophie de Monnier, retired from Gien under the name of Marquise de Malleroy, had been found on September 9 in the little house where she lived in the rue Sainte-Claires with her legs and arms bound to a chair near two charcoal braziers which had burned out. Sophie had asphyxiated herself upon learning of the sudden death of her neighbor, M. de Potérat, whom she was going to marry. She had been buried that evening at the same hour as her lover.

The Abbé looked at Mirabeau. The latter trembled, 'changed expression several times, and,

not being able to control himself longer,' held out his hand and left the Assembly, where 'it was two or three days before he reappeared.'

During these days the great orator remained shut up with his memories. He saw again the Fort de Joux, the evenings at the residence of the de Monniers at Pontarlier, the little room in Amsterdam where he had been happy, the dungeon of Vincennes where he had believed he would die, and those several days in the convent of Gien eight years before: so short a time! She had committed suicide for another as she had so often wished to do for him? Had she still thought sometimes of Gabriel, now famous? No. She had not loved glory. 'Ambition always makes a man like you forget love,' she had said to him on the day of her first avowals. Her vocation was to love. To each one his cross. He, carrying that of genius, was doomed to the enmity of those whom he wished to save. And now this death left him still a little more alone on earth, for it had remained an obscure comfort to feel at a distance the presence of a former love.

Two months before, the terrible Marquis de Mirabeau had calmly died while seated in his window in the sun correcting an error in reading which his granddaughter, the Marquise d'Aragon, had just made. All Mirabeau's past had now descended into the tomb.

But the gravity of the hour did not permit long melancholy.

For some days now the Assembly seemed invaded

with a defiance of itself and fear of the precise responsibilities which it had to face and before which, running counter to Mirabeau, it felt itself more feeble than before established doctrine. On September 19, this feeling came to light in a resolution offered by Volney which led to a sort of dissolution by persuasion, the deputies being urged to determine the method of election of their successors and to order elections immediately in all the kingdom, in order 'to substitute for themselves a true national representation.' On top of that, the Vicomte de Mirabeau proposed to forbid those elected to the National Assembly to attend the future chamber.

This was not the first time that the two brothers were to oppose one another. After having courageously gone through the war in America and having won the rank of colonel there, the youngest of the Mirabeaux, just before the Revolution started, had escaped the gravest disciplinary punishment for certain liberties he had taken with the cash-box of his regiment. This had not prevented him from being sent by the nobility of Limousin to the States-General, where he spent his time in witty remarks and drunken farces. When they saw him descending the benches on the Right, short, enormous, and in his cups, they cried:

'Here comes that barrel of a Mirabeau!'

Besides, he did not hide his love for wine, and the only excuse he had ever offered his brother was in these words:

'What do you expect? Of all the vices in the family, you have left me only this one.'

Mirabeau had no trouble in having the propositions of Volney and his brother rejected on September 19, though they were to come up again and unfortunately be adopted after his death.

It was instead on September 24 that he was to put forth all his effort and, this time, to support his enemy Necker, who had become Minister again and was as incapable as ever. Bankruptcy threatened. The efforts at floating loans had failed. The Minister of Finances demanded a voluntary and patriotic contribution of one quarter of every one's income. Mirabeau doubted the efficacy of this measure, preferring a forced contribution, but the treasury was empty. There was neither time to reflect nor opportunity to practice evasion. It was necessary to arrive at a solution. Meanwhile the Assembly reflected, evaded, and wished precisely not to solve the problem. Three times the great orator, greater this day than ever, climbed onto the platform, pressed and harassed his colleagues, and showed them the urgency of bestowing on the Minister of Finances a 'provisional dictatorship' now that 'the revenues of the State had been reduced to nothing, and the public strength was without resources.'

'Do not permit yourselves to ask for time,' he expostulated. 'Misfortune never grants it.... Bankruptcy, hideous bankruptcy is here threatening to consume you, your property, and your honor, and you deliberate!'

When he had finished, the entire Assembly stood up and passed the decree unanimously.

'Since that day Mirabeau has been considered a unique being,' wrote Étienne Dumont, who nevertheless is so severe in regard to his friend in more than one page of memoirs.

Mirabeau had, in fact, won control of the Assembly, and still he knew discouragement. To what end were all these triumphs carried through for a government incapable of governing, to what good this courage displayed for cowards? To what good the expenditure of this talent to save men who did not wish to be saved? It was at this time that he said to the Comte de La Marck, who had come from Austria at almost the same time as Marie Antoinette and had remained an intimate of the Queen:

'All is lost. The King and the Queen will die, and you shall see, the populace will trample their bodies.'

When the sovereigns' friend cried in horror at this vision:

'Yes, yes,' Mirabeau repeated. 'They will trample their bodies. You do not understand the dangers of their position well enough. It is necessary, however, to make them recognize them.'

If at least one brain or one heart could be found among the princes around the throne! It was not the King, after all, who was important, but Royalty! Even at the time when he had put to the vote his resolution on the withdrawal of troops, Mirabeau had said to Mounier, La Fayette, and Duport in one of the offices of the Assembly:

'"Messieurs, I met the Duc d'Orléans yesterday, to whom I said: *Monseigneur, you cannot deny but that we must soon have Louis XVII in place of Louis XVI, and that if things were not thus you would at least be Lieutenant General of the Kingdom.* The Duc d'Orléans replied to me very amiably, indeed, messieurs.'

The Comte de La Marck, who had arranged an interview in 1788 between the Prince and the deputy, brought them together again at his table toward the end of September. But Mirabeau came away from the dinner disgusted with the Duc, who had given him the impression of a rather base conspirator. The Duc, on his side, after the monarchical statements of Mirabeau, asked his host:

'When will Mirabeau learn to serve the Court?'

'It seems to me that up to the present he has not even begun,' replied M. de La Marck.

Nevertheless, this succession of remarks aroused in the Austrian gentleman the idea of attempting to bring the Ministers and Mirabeau together. He asked an audience of the Queen and pleaded his cause before her. But Marie Antoinette's aversion was invincible.

'I can't think we shall ever be unfortunate enough to be reduced to the painful extremity of running to Mirabeau.'

Did the great orator know of this reply when on Monday, October 5, 1789, the letter from Louis XVI arrived at the Assembly which approved the decrees of August 4 conditionally and adjourned the acceptance of the Declaration of Rights?

At any rate, he no longer held his temper. 'One could,' he said, 'address the King with that truth and frankness which Philippe II's fool put into his trivial words: "What should you do, Philippe, if all the world said no when you said yes?"'

On that day Mirabeau felt that a renewal of the popular rage exhibited in July was imminent.

For two weeks he had been harboring Camille Desmoulins in his little apartment in Versailles, for he had a taste for hospitality and practiced it generously at the same time that he admitted to the Comte de La Marck that he 'knew not where to lay his head and lacked even a single penny.' Besides, he kept up relations with the clubs and with the Parisian districts. He was better informed on the people's state of feeling than was the King. He knew the exasperation caused by the arrival of the Flemish regiment at Versailles and above all by the banquet at which, on October 1, the bodyguard had torn off their blue-and-red cockades, crying: 'To Hell with the Assembly! We will take back our white cockades!'

He accused the Queen of counter-revolutionary conspiracies which would reincite and throw the crowd into an assault on the Court. This was why Mirabeau jumped in and took up the challenge when one of the members of the Right defied Pétion to repeat and write out the denunciation which he had made in the morning on the rostrum against the bodyguards' banquet.

'I regard the denunciation which has just been

provoked as impolitic. However, if any one persists in demanding it, I am ready myself to furnish all the details and to sign it; but first I ask that this Assembly declare that the person of the King alone is inviolable, and that all the other individuals of the State, no matter who they are, are equally subject and responsible before the law.'

Then, upon returning to his place, he said aloud, with his face raised toward the deputies: 'I would denounce the Queen and the Duc de Guise.'

At this moment Paris was moving on Versailles, ten thousand women before and the National Guard behind, dragging along La Fayette. Mirabeau was warned, foresaw what was going to happen, and sought a means of letting it be known. Whom should he tell of this peril? The King was, as usual, out hunting. The Ministers did not come to the Assembly. There was a president, Mounier. Mirabeau climbed on a chair and, in a low voice:

'Mounier, Paris is marching on us.'

'I know nothing about it,' said Mounier.

'Believe me or not, but Paris, I tell you, is marching on us. Are you ill? Go up to the Château and tell them, if you wish, that you have it from me . . . there is not a moment to lose.'

Mounier then replied with that magnificently parliamentary statement:

'I never hurry deliberations. There's only too much of that. They have only to kill us all. The affairs of the Republic will go on the better.'

'M. le Président,' replied Mirabeau, 'you turn a

pretty sentence.' And, persuaded that he could not find a man of action anywhere, worn out with having to do with so many kinds of fools, he left the session and went to finish the afternoon at the home of the Comte de La Marck, who, at least, believed him and understood him.

Naturally when the Parisian riot unfurled itself on the Assembly and the Château, nothing had been foreseen. Mounier first let twenty women come in, then a hundred, then hundreds, asking for bread and for Mirabeau: 'our little mother Mirabeau.'

After having cravenly put a sham decree for sustenance to the vote, he finally decided, under the pretext of going to seek the royal sanction for the Declaration of Rights, to abandon his chair to the Bishop of Langres, just when he should have kept it.

Louis XVI at last returned from hunting. The crowd was there, hurling itself at the iron gates, demanding the 'resignation' of the King, and 'the guts of the Queen.' The Ministers deliberated. Marie Antoinette, among them, said:

'We must, however, make up our minds.'

'Gently, gently,' repeated Louis XVI, and he consulted La Tour du Pin, the Minister of War, who, among these irresolutes, was the most shaken of all.

Hours passed. The soldiers had no orders. La Fayette entered, placed his hand upon his heart, and swore that he would answer for all, provided that they withdraw the Flemish regiment and that the French guards should relieve the bodyguard. The King yielded to La Fayette, yielded to Mounier,

THE MARKET-WOMEN ON THEIR WAY TO VERSAILLES, OCTOBER 5, 1789
From an old print

yielded to the deputations of women, consented to the withdrawal of the faithful troops, accorded the sanction of decrees and the wheat from his granaries: everything that was asked of him. He thought of fleeing to Rouen, did not dare, and went away to bed.

Mirabeau returned to the Assembly, where the session had been resumed at eleven o'clock in the evening, and found it transformed into a pigsty with the women seated on the deputies' benches and two of them on the knees of his brother the Vicomte, who was thoroughly drunk. Mounier, who had distributed the wine, intended in this public market and at this hour to have the debate continued on the code of penal procedure. The women were shouting:

'Bread, bread, and not so much talk!'

Mirabeau rose with shame and fury on his face:

'I should like very much to know why people take it upon themselves to come and disturb our sessions!' he shouted.

They did not hear what he said. They knew only that he had spoken and that it was he, he at last, the great Mirabeau; a cry of idolatry rose from the tumultuous crowd.

At 3.30 o'clock in the morning, he obtained an adjournment of the session and the women citizens took off their skirts to sleep in the hall among the remains of their repast. The next morning, October 6, upon awakening, he learned of the invasion of the Château because of a relief being badly made, a door being left unshut and La Fayette's slumber. The

crowd now demanded hostages: the King, the Queen, the young princes whom it wished to take back to Paris, and once more heads flourished at the end of pikes and swung beneath the royal balcony. The Assembly reconvened at eleven o'clock, while the vehicles were already being hitched up. Mounier wanted the Assembly to go to the King. To accomplish what? To add to the disorder, to lose all that remained to him of prestige? Mirabeau opposed it. A deputation would suffice. It was no sooner named than it was already useless. The King had yielded once more. He was preparing to go out. Mounier had just time to send him an escort of one hundred deputies and to exclude Mirabeau whose popularity horrified him. No matter! Mirabeau and Barnave got the Assembly to vote that it would not separate from the King. The procession began to move. Louis XVI resignedly followed the two severed heads of his officers. All the members of his family were prisoners, his bodyguard was defeated, the deputies were impotent, La Fayette was in tricolor, and the triumphant fishwomen were screaming and shaking the red branches of poplars.

A comical fellow, in passing, drew this motto from the two days' events:

'Versailles to let!'

The funeral of the monarchy went on until evening in a long uproar of abuse and laughter.

In these hours, when the King passively yielded to his destiny, when the government let go of everything, when two hundred deputies asked for their

passports, when Mounier escaped into Dauphiné before emigrating abroad, Mirabeau alone knew not a single minute of illusion nor of abandonment.

'The King and the Queen and, with them, France, are lost if the royal family does not get out of Paris,' he said the next day to the Comte de La Marck.

But immediately he added:

'I am busy with a plan to get them out. Are you in a position to go and assure them that they can count on me?'

On October 15, he presented this plan. Neither the King nor the Assembly was free. There was no more army. What was to be done? Accept frankly the abolition of the feudal régime, 'expiation due after ten centuries of delirium,' win back the strength of the executive power by reëstablishing the contacts between the monarchy and the people; give a frank support to the principles of the Revolution and to the decrees of the Assembly, suppress the aristocratic bodies such as the Parliament, reduce the list of civil prisoners to one million, declare that the public debt engaged the national honor; then leave Paris in full daylight, and immediately transfer the seat of government to Rouen, convene the Assembly there, and recover both liberty and power. But, above all, not to follow the advice which the royal entourage had been urging for some time:

'To retire to Metz or to any other frontier would be to declare war on the nation and to abdicate the

throne. . . . I, myself, would denounce the monarchy after such a step.'

This tract was given by the Comte de La Marck to the brother of the King on the night of October 15. The future Louis XVIII read it and approved it, but declared that the King would never dare follow it.

'The weakness and indecision of the King are beyond expression,' he declared. 'To give you an idea of his character, imagine yourself trying vainly to hold a lot of oiled ivory balls together.'

And, satisfied with his simile, the Comte de Provence told Louis XVI nothing.

Mirabeau did not trust again to the King, to the Comte de Provence, or to the government for action. He displayed in the second fortnight of October and during the beginning of November such activity and audacity as passed beyond anything that could be expected, even from him. He negotiated, schemed, had laws passed, and made decisions as if he felt himself responsible for France.

However, the Court had never so hated him and slandered him. He was believed to be on the side of the Duc d'Orléans. But did he run away to London, as did this Prince of the Blood?

'They pretend that I am of his party. I would not have him for my valet,' he said to the deputies.

A M. de Valfons declared he had seen him on the evening of October 5, with a great saber under his arm enticing away the troops, at an hour when he was talking peaceably with M. de La Marck. This

Valfons had confused him with a certain Comte de Gamaches who was almost of the same build. This made him laugh.

'When everything is weighed and examined,' he bantered, 'the testimony of M. de Valfons has nothing really vexatious in it except for M. de Gamaches, who will find himself legally and vehemently suspected of being very ugly, since he resembles me.'

He did not waste his time defending himself. He had more important worries: to make himself the master of his country, to control the Revolution, and to make a new order instead of a catastrophe come out of it. Whatever may have been his scorn for La Fayette, this Simpleton-Cæsar and Cromwell-Swellhead as he nicknamed him, he tried to win him over to his programme of government. They had interviews in Passy. La Fayette took him to Necker, who this time kept him five hours. Montmorin, in his turn, tried to lure him. But they wished to persuade him with money or to send him away as an ambassador. This was not what he sought. He sought power. He made up lists of ministers; he wrote in Sieyès; Talleyrand for Foreign Affairs; La Fayette, the inevitable, to be 'generalissimo for the term of reorganizing the army'; Necker himself, in order 'to make him as impotent as he was incapable and yet to conserve his popularity for the King.' As for himself, he would enter into the Council of the King without a department; to-day we should say, 'President of the Council without portfolio.'

And already Mirabeau was taking initiatives belonging to a head of the government. He proposed and had voted a martial law destined for the repression of riots. He had 'the Ministers of the King invited to declare positively the means and the resources which the National Assembly could furnish them to place them in a position to assure the maintenance of the kingdom.' This was to oblige the government to form a plan and the Assembly to apply it.

He exacted that clerical goods be returned to the nation. He substituted himself for the Ministry; he directed, persuaded, and commanded the Assembly. His hour approached. He was sure of it and exhaled optimism.

'The monarchy,' he wrote to Mauvillon, 'is in danger rather because no one governs than because any one conspires. If no pilot presents himself, it is probable that the vessel will run aground. If, on the contrary, force of circumstance compels a man of brains to be called upon, and provides the courage to overcome all sensitivity to others' opinions and jealousy of subordinates, which will continue to offer opposition, you cannot imagine how easy it would be to put the vessel afloat again. The resources of this country, even the mobility of this nation, which is its capital vice, can contrive so many expedients and facilities that in France one must never either presume or despair.'

He had only one step more to take before the leap: that was to obtain that the executive and legislative

powers cease to consider each other as enemies and discuss together the public welfare; that is to say, have it decided that the government should be included in the Assembly. On November 5, he began the discussion, the Assembly applauded. On the sixth most of the orators echoed his proposition. The project seemed to be won. But on the seventh, Lanjuinais asked, on the contrary, that the representatives of the nation should not be able 'during the legislature of which they were members nor during the three years following,' either to belong to the Ministry or to fulfill public functions. And his discourse took on the tone of an accusation against Mirabeau:

'An eloquent genius influences and subjugates you; what would he not do if he were Minister?'

At these words the Assembly caught itself up. Moreover, during the last three days the Court, the government, and perhaps La Fayette himself had been kindling distrust of Mirabeau's ambition. This was easily accomplished. All those who did not run any chance of being Ministers joined together against him who might become one. The revolt of the mediocre men took on the aspect of a burst of disinterestedness. These deputies did not understand that, failing to create leaders, they would leave the new régime at the mercy of the populace or despotism. Yet those who wished to substitute the election system for that of hereditary authority refused, by a contradiction which would destroy their entire work, to bring power out of the elections.

They overthrew the Revolution to overthrow Mirabeau.

The deputy was beaten. He was not to save the representative régime. He was not to govern France. The Assembly condemned itself to impotence with him. It had avenged itself of genius.

CHAPTER XX

The Queen

'We are at the most critical moment of the Revolution,' Mirabeau wrote to the Comte de La Marck on February 16, 1790. '. . . The war of elections, the war of smugglers, the war of taxes, the war of religion are all in the germ . . . it is impossible to guess what will be the result of the crisis which is beginning.'

Paris was delirious with optimism at the time and believed the Revolution was finished. After a visit of Louis XVI to the Assembly, the people kissed each other in the streets for two days through love of the nation, of the King, of the law, of the Assembly, and of the Constitution.

Mirabeau was not the dupe of this intoxication. How could a people get anywhere who did not know how to conduct themselves and did not wish to be led?

'The Assembly believed it had solved the problem of a perfectly free monarchy by creating a royalty without power, without action, without influence; that is, by admitting it in the theory and forgetting it in the practice.'

By self-contradiction, the principles failed; by fighting among themselves, the men defaulted. They did not want Mirabeau and found no one except him. He had definitely sized up La Fayette.

'The circumstances are very great, but the men are very small,' he had written him on December 1, 1789, in reproaching him for 'the fatal effect of his personal indecision . . . his taste for mediocre men,' of a nature 'to compromise public affairs.'

For a time his hopes had been set on the Comte de Provence. He had even, when the latter was suspected of having taken part in Favras's counter-revolutionary plot, composed the defense which the future Louis XVIII presented on December 25 to the Assembly of the Commune. Monsieur would very much have liked to attach him to himself. La Fayette in his *Mémoires* declares that he saw an outline of an agreement written by the hand of the brother of the King, which promised Mirabeau fifty thousand francs a month to abstain from debating when he was not in harmony with the Court, and to help the sovereign with his influence and his eloquence as he thought useful for the well-being of the State and the interest of the King. Did Mirabeau know of these propositions? At any rate, he did not listen to them, and from January, 1790, treated Monsieur as 'mere cotton wadding,' and judged him 'beneath anything,' and continued to live by borrowing and by the expediencies of bookshops.

But he was tired and had lost much of his physical resistance, of his moral force, of his faith in himself. M. Louis de Loménie noted that 'during the month of March, 1790, he presented only short observations at widely spaced intervals; during the

month of April, he spoke only three times.' An equal disgust for the Assembly and for the Court removed him from a struggle which seemed to him sterile. He regretted not having accepted an embassy in order to leave France. He would have liked that to Constantinople.

At the moment when he was thinking of retiring, the Queen was thinking of him.

However, she knew that he had threatened to denounce her on the rostrum of the Assembly; that in the course of his conversations with La Fayette, one day when the latter had asked him to give up persecuting the Queen, he had replied with a gay cynicism: 'Very well, General, since you wish it, she shall live! An humiliated queen can be useful, but a queen with her throat cut is no good except to this poor Guibert who could compose a bad tragedy of it.'

No, she was ignorant of nothing. Only she knew that the courtiers at Versailles had passed worse remarks against her honor and that at this hour the emigrants were defaming her in all the courts of Europe. Above all she listened to the counsellor whom her mother, the Empress Maria Theresa, had given her: the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, the ambassador from Austria.

The latter was convinced that the only power in the world still capable of saving the sister of his emperor was named Mirabeau. As he was bound by friendship to his compatriot, M. de La Marck, he had known the résumé of the note of October 15

which Monsieur had never handed over and in which the statesman of the Revolution advised the sovereigns to get out of Paris at all cost. This plan struck Marie Antoinette, as it almost agreed with that which now obsessed her mind. Besides, as prisoner in the Tuileries, she had been, since October 6, 'unfortunate enough to be reduced to the painful extremity of running to Mirabeau.'

However, she still hesitated. Had not this revolutionist been the accomplice of the Duc d'Orléans in the insurrection which she still saw before her eyes? Even to save her children, Marie Antoinette would not be willing to humiliate herself before the person responsible for those October days.

'If, however, the accusation against M. de Mirabeau were false! M. de La Marck told me he had talked with him on the afternoon of October 5.'

So the Comte de La Marck, then in Holland, received, toward the middle of March, 1790, a letter from the Comte de Mercy announcing that the King and Queen had changed their opinion of Mirabeau, and begging him to return to Paris to find out if the great orator was still disposed to give his assistance to the sovereign, and advising him to keep the matter an absolute secret, particularly from Necker and the Ministers.

Upon his return, M. de La Marck invited Mirabeau with M. de Mercy one evening. The ambassador listened to the orator explaining his conceptions of the future and felt at last he had found a man sufficiently resourceful to reconcile the Revolution

and the monarchy. Some days later the King and Queen received M. de La Marck and repeated to him their desire to enter into negotiations with the deputy.

When the Austrian gentleman had recounted this interview to Mirabeau, the latter felt himself resuscitated. An opening had appeared in the blind alley in which he found himself: an opening to power, to fortune, to a Richelieu destiny as master of kings. This great adventure offered in addition the story-book attraction of a queen calling for help. Mirabeau threw himself into it.

M. de La Marck then told him of Marie Antoinette's suspicions that he had participated in the October riots.

'Immediately he changed expression, he became yellow, green, and hideous. His horror was impressive,' recounted M. de La Marck. At this point in the conversation, the negotiator believed he could ask Mirabeau to outline his programme in a confidential letter to the King. Mirabeau promised, and on May 10, 1790, sent a letter which was addressed, not to the King, but to the Queen.

'I professed,' he wrote, 'monarchical principles when I saw in the Court only its weakness, and when, knowing neither the soul nor the mind of the daughter of Marie-Thérèse, I could not count on this august auxiliary.' A declaration of principle followed which was destined to establish his relations with the sovereign on the basis of absolute loyalty: 'I engage myself to serve with all my in-

fluence the *true* interests of the King, and in order that this assertion may not appear too vague, I declare that I believe a counter-revolution as *dangerous and criminal* as I believe to be *chimerical* the hope and the scheme for any government whatsoever in France without a chief clothed in the necessary power to apply all the public force to the execution of the *law*.'

Thus the sovereigns could not be under any illusion. Mirabeau remained a judge of their *true* interests. He intended to maintain the monarchical power, but in order that the latter might *apply all the public force to the execution of the law*, that is, in respect to the decisions made by the country's elected. If Louis XVI or Marie Antoinette dreamed of a counter-revolution, they should have known that they would have nothing to hope for from Mirabeau, in whose eyes this dream constituted more than a danger, a *crime*. It would have been impossible for him to explain at once more clearly and more proudly. Not a concession: the repeated affirmation of a doctrine in which the orator had never varied. So it is absurd to contend that the deputy sold himself. One does not sell one's self without giving up something. What had Mirabeau given up? At the time when power was prohibited him by the vote of the Assembly, the monarchy came to him. He enrolled. Madame de Staël, whom one might call his hereditary enemy, was correct when she wrote: 'Whether or not he accepted money from the Court, Mirabeau was very determined to make himself

the master and not the instrument of that court.'

As he had struggled at cross-purposes in 1789 to impose his conceptions on the Assembly, he was from May, 1790, until his death to struggle to impose them on the Queen and the King.

At the beginning Marie Antoinette and he had what might almost be called a honeymoon. It was she who received the notes from Mirabeau, addressed to her twice a week, and delivered by M. de La Marck to the Archbishop of Toulouse, M. de Fontanges, an intimate of the Queen, and the latter communicated them to her royal husband when it pleased her. Far from being hurt by the frankness of which Mirabeau had given proof, she showed herself thrilled, happy, and enthusiastic from the first day of their secret relations. The Comte de La Marck was almost scandalized to find her as gay and care-free as in former days and recalling memories of the Trianon as though they were about to begin again.

'What shall we do,' she asked, 'in order that M. de Mirabeau shall be content with me and the King?'

M. de La Marck had loaned enough money to Mirabeau to know that he had debts. And, when a gentleman of the eighteenth century had debts, he considered it honorable to have them paid by the King. Thus had decided, among others, the Prince de Conti on the day when he had received from his Majesty one million five hundred thousand francs to pay off his great number of creditors. The Keepers

of the Seals, Miromesnil and Lamoignon, though more humble, at least felt it just that they should be granted one hundred and two hundred thousand francs respectively. M. de La Marck pointed out how noble the tradition was. The King wanted a figure set. La Marck put the question to Mirabeau. 'Bah!' the latter replied, 'with one hundred louis a month I shall be able to get along.'

The secretaries shrugged their shoulders. They did not flatter themselves that they knew better than their employer what he owed, but they could guarantee a minimum figure of two hundred and eight thousand livres. M. de La Marck, for his part, felt his admiration touched at the thought that a prince of the Revolution would content himself with a monthly allowance of one hundred louis, when the King had shown his liberality by giving twelve millions to the Prince de Condé, twenty-five millions to the Comte de Provence, and fifty-six millions to the Comte d'Artois. The royalty entreated the first orator of the day to be its 'consulting attorney,' according to the explanation of Proudhon. It owed him fees worthy of itself and of him.

Moreover, the Queen was watching and did not intend to show herself less liberal toward her new favorite than toward the others. Louis XVI, easily persuaded, said to the Comte de La Marck in giving him Mirabeau's first letter:

'You will keep it as well as these four checks signed by me each for two hundred and fifty thou-

sand livres. If, as he promises, M. de Mirabeau serves me well, then at the end of the session of the National Assembly you will give him these checks for which he will receive a million. I will have his debts paid in the mean time and you decide yourself what sum I ought to give him each month in order to cover his present needs.'

They agreed on six thousand livres a month.

At this news, Mirabeau entered into an 'intoxication of happiness' which surprised the envoy of the Queen, so natural did it all appear to a lord of this epoch who was accustomed to respecting royal gratuities much the same as the French of our day respect decorations.

Besides, Mirabeau did not even take the trouble to hide it. If he forgot more than one creditor in his distributions, at least he made haste to furnish a residence in the Chaussée d'Antin with rare bibelots and antiques and to buy Buffon's library as well as to keep open house. Moreover, one had only to open the royalist review *Les Actes des apôtres* to discover that the exact figure of his monthly allowance was known.

Soon, however, Mirabeau was to notice that if he still believed himself free, the King believed he had bought him. In this lay the obscure drama of the end of his life. Thiers understood him very well when he wrote: 'Different from those who sell their feeble talents and their cowardly conscience at a high price, Mirabeau, unshakable in his principles, alternately fought with his party and the Court, as

if he had not expected popularity from the former and means of existence from the latter.'

When he first entered into his pact with the Queen, the reconciliation of his duties appeared easy. 'I feel myself imperiously called into affairs at a moment when, vowed in a way to scornful silence, I believed myself to desire nothing but retirement,' he had written in a letter on May 10.

He in fact took possession of the rostrum again with an extraordinary brilliance in the course of the discussion on the rights of war and peace, which was provoked on May 14, 1790, by the preparations in England for war against Spain, the latter being allied to France. At this time Europe was to pass its judgment on the Revolution. Foreign politics, brushed aside in the debates of 1789, suddenly uncovered its problems to an Assembly which was unaware even of their existence. M. de Montmorin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, had warned the deputies in a letter that the threatening attitude of England obliged the King to order the armament of fourteen warships. What reply should be given? All those who are not acquainted with a subject are naturally tempted, in order to avoid it, to take refuge in principles. The Assembly yielded to this inclination and decided suddenly to discuss the question as to whom belonged the right of war and of peace. To the King or to itself? Naturally it preferred to take it upon itself. Robespierre judged the question simply enough. It sufficed to manifest perpetual and universal will for peace. Pétion sup-

ported him: 'We must declare that France . . . considers its boundaries as set by eternal destiny.' Volney cried out in the fire of his enthusiasm: 'You are going, I dare say, to convoke an Assembly of Nations.' Already!

These effusions had lasted for five days, cut into by vain protestations from Cazalès and the Abbé Maury, when Mirabeau appeared and brought the Assembly gently from the skies down to earth. Neither with long sentences nor grand gestures, but with brief arguments and abrupt questions, the men were placed face to face with realities and presented the picture of the mob deciding for war or for peace, of passions governing diplomacy.

'Will one be better assured of having only equitable and just wars if the right to make war is delegated to an Assembly of seven hundred people? . . . Look at the political assemblies: it has always been under the influence of passion that they have declared war.'

War without preparation, deliberation in the hour of action, civil dissensions reacting on the direction of hostilities, peace at the mercy of emotion: all these pictures succeeded one another with a tragic rapidity. It might be feared, no doubt, that a king would return with his victorious army, 'not to take back his position of king-citizen, but to conquer that of a tyrant? . . . Very well . . . in democratic states more than in any other, such successes were to be feared, it is among the nations which have no kings that these successes make kings. It is

for Carthage, it is for Rome that citizens such as Hannibal and Cæsar are dangerous.' It seemed that on this May 20, 1790, Mirabeau's penetrating eyes saw beyond the day when the Revolution was to declare peace to the world, beyond those other days of invasion, of mobilization *en masse*, of war on Europe, saw that submission to glory which in 'a nation without a king' was to prepare for the accession of a Cæsar.

He finished with a resolution for a decree which left to the Assembly the right to discuss war, to control negotiations, to ratify treaties, and reserved for the King that of proposing war and of negotiating and concluding peace. He crowned these principles, which were to pass into all the constitutions of the future, with the magnificent declaration:

'The French nation renounces the undertaking of any war with the object of making conquests, and will never employ its force against the liberty of any people.'

Listening to Mirabeau, the majority of the Assembly had a feeling of defeat. The sentiments that it wished to hear were not expressed and yet this logic pressed, pursued, and enclosed it in its embrace. How escape? Barnave! He was the one who could assure the deputies their revenge. He had much more talent than Mirabeau. His rhetoric, moreover, was beautiful, and how elegant his manners! The Jacobin Club had only to summon the people to listen the next morning and Mirabeau would crumble from his pedestal.

A two days' duel took place. On one side the slender Barnave, arriving escorted by a crowd, was applauded by the deputies before he spoke. On May 21, he criticized Mirabeau's bill article by article, as if he were in court, with disconnected sentences beginning, 'Indeed, yes,' and, 'It is true that . . . It will happen, perhaps . . . M. de Mably thinks . . .' to end up at last with a supreme argument piously drawn from antiquity, as the oratorical fashion of the day was: 'Pericles undertook the Peloponnesian war when he found himself unable to balance his accounts.' Such an ovation greeted the end of this address that they wished to put the resolution to the vote on the spot, and his opponent had all the trouble in the world to obtain a chance to reply.

On the other hand, Mirabeau on May 22 entered into the center of a storming mob, fifty thousand men being massed around the Assembly to jeer him. He waited three quarters of an hour on the platform for a minute of silence. Then, taking advantage of it, he shook his terrible wild boar's head and spoke:

'Rumors of perfidy and corruption are being spread; the vengeance of the populace is being provoked to support the tyranny of opinions. . . . And me also, only a few days ago they wished to carry me in triumph, and now they cry in the streets: *the great treason of the Comte de Mirabeau.* . . . What does it matter to me! These jolts from high to low will not stop me in my career . . .' And from the delicate lips which contrasted with the formidable

visage fell this scornful challenge: 'Reply if you can. Then slander as much as you like.'

Then he reviewed Barnave's discourse, tore it in pieces which he threw to the Assembly in little phrases. 'You do not reply to me . . . I continue . . .' The arguments filed by in a sort of furious race. The conclusion arrived: 'M. Barnave has not touched on the question at all. . . . He has merely declaimed. . . . He has cited Pericles making war in order not to have to balance his accounts. Does he not seem to point out that Pericles was a king or a despotic minister? Pericles was a man who, knowing how to flatter the popular passion and how to get himself applauded upon descending from the rostrum by his generosity and that of his friends, dragged to the Peloponnesian war . . . whom?' Mirabeau stopped and looked slowly and questioningly around the room before lashing out the response:

'Whom? The National Assembly of Athens.'

That was enough. The National Assembly of France gave over. The eleven articles of Mirabeau's decree were voted. The deputies had found their master.

At the Tuileries the Queen took to herself the glory of this triumph. In June she wrote of Mirabeau to her confidant Mercy: 'If he is sincere, I have every ground for being satisfied with him.'

But Louis XVI had just had an idea. Since October 6 he had believed in La Fayette like all the silly people of the time. Since the Queen believed in Mirabeau, why not join together the popularities of

the soldier and the orator? The combination appeared so beautiful to the sovereign that he decided to write La Fayette about it. The letter finished, however, he did not urge on his initiative so far as to send it, and left it in his iron cupboard where the Revolution was to find it one day. It was the Queen who, on her side, advised the understanding with the general.

Mirabeau resigned himself to it and on June 1 offered La Fayette the position of His Eminence The Go-Between, but warned the Queen the same day: 'M. de La Fayette is, of all citizens, the one on whom the King can least depend.' To be sure, Louis XVI, who did not often have ideas, played unluckily in trying to unite the two rivals who were occupied at the very moment in disputing the favors of clubs, those of the Assembly and, what was equally serious, those of the pretty Mme. de Condorcet.

This eternal La Fayette exasperated Mirabeau. He let it be seen in a series of notes to the Court. Moreover, this first misunderstanding between the sovereigns and him was to be followed by many others. Marie Antoinette was too much a woman not to read into the deputy her own plans in these first days of optimism. In comparing the letters that she received and those that she wrote, one discovers that she dreamed much better than she read.

In an attempt to obtain from her brother the Emperor an armed demonstration on the French frontier from which she foolishly expected a reëstablishment of royal authority, she covered with Mira-

beau's name this scheme which she alone had formed, and the extravagance of which the memoirs of Mirabeau justly denounce.

However, she could not long deceive herself on these grounds. One interview was to clear up everything. This interview, which the Queen had desired for several weeks, was impossible at the Tuileries. Fortunately summer took the royal family to Saint-Cloud, and the Queen was able to write on June 29 to M. de Mercy: 'We are counting on seeing Mirabeau Friday evening. I have found a place which is not very commodious, but sufficiently so to see him, and removed from all the inconveniences of the garden and the Château.'

Upon reflection, she preferred to give him a rendezvous at the back of the garden Saturday morning, July 3, at eight o'clock, before the people of the Court had arisen.

On Friday, Mirabeau went to sleep in Passy at the home of his sister du Saillant and left there the next morning very early. He took his nephew in the costume of a postilion, for he foresaw the possibility of the royal invitation turning into an ambush. The young man was to run to warn Paris if his uncle did not return.

When Marie Antoinette saw Mirabeau she was seized with a shiver of horror, the memory of which has been kept for us by her faithful Mme. Campan. Before the vulgarity of this thick body, the horror of this dramatic face riddled with smallpox, she trembled and believed she had become the prey of this

monster in whom was incarnated the dreadful power of a revolted people. But Mirabeau began to speak and already the Queen did not recognize him. The enchantment of this voice brought up the serene vision of a time when, instead of having to lift up the inert mass of Louis XVI which always relapsed again, she could support herself on the strong arm of a man built for struggle and victory.

'M. de Mirabeau,' she said sweetly, 'even when I believed you one of my enemies, I always felt there was a difference between you and the others.'

The heart of the deputy swelled. He felt a sudden desire to die for this woman. He expressed it and again Marie Antoinette realized her dominion over men. She deployed this art with an abandon which aroused fanaticism in those near her and scorn in those who, watching it from afar, could not see, beneath the coquetry, the pride which kept her pure until martyrdom.

Then Mirabeau unfolded his plan. Saint-Cloud was too near. Under one pretext or another, royalty must reach either Compiègne or Fontainebleau, remain there and call the representatives there, tear them away from the domination of the streets of Paris, and then surround itself with dependable troops. He named the regiments. He named the general, M. de Bouillé, he whom the Assembly was soon to congratulate on having quickly suppressed the riots of Nancy. La Fayette would follow after. He, Mirabeau, would bring along the deputies.

Marie Antoinette listened. A delicious repose in-

vaded her. She was so tired of commanding, of carrying all alone the responsibilities too heavy for her. At last, here was a chief whose manly language carried her above the childish malice and blind complaisances which made her lose Turgot and lose herself for a Polignac. The King, who arrived during the interview, approved with all his ineffectual good will. Mirabeau, proud of having convinced the sovereigns, enjoyed dominating by the power of his single brain these nine centuries of kings of whom he felt himself the master and inheritor on this morning in July. He kissed the hand which the Queen held out to him:

'Madame,' he cried, 'the monarchy is saved!'

Five days later, *l'Ami du Peuple* recounted the interview. Insults were hurled. Already in the May libel sheet, *Trahison découverte de comte de Mirabeau*, people had read: 'Pay attention or the people will parade your head as they paraded that of Foulon, whose mouth was filled with hay.' Again it was Fréron who threatened: 'Look out or you'll be hanged to the lamp-post!' Again it was Marat who demanded the erection of eight hundred gallows in the Tuileries and Mirabeau hanged to the first one. Duport, in *La Société Patriotique de 1789*, proclaimed: 'A traitor is amongst us.' Abusing him was fashionable. No matter in what direction Mirabeau turned during the summer and the autumn of 1790, he found it as furious to the right as to the left:

'Rascal! Assassin!' the noble M. de Guilhermy cried at him in the middle of the Assembly.

Then there were provocations to duel which Mirabeau tranquilly wrote in one after another on the list of accounts that he promised to settle after the separation of the Assembly.

So much outcry did not at all disturb his hope that soon he would govern France in collaboration with Marie Antoinette. Such was the constant subject of his conversations with M. de La Marck, who did not cease encouraging him in this thought and wished to place the Queen 'at the helm of affairs.'

'That is what we must achieve,' the latter was to write to the Comte de Mercy even after the death of Mirabeau, 'for in the end we must admit that the King is incapable of reigning and that the Queen alone can fill his place any day that she is seconded.' (Letter of September 28, 1791.)

The two gentlemen were very much in agreement: *A strong minister in the Council, who is in harmony with her* — this was what, according to the expressions of La Marck himself, they had seen in Mirabeau and what Mirabeau in fact wished to be.

Between himself and this goal it seemed to him that there was only one obstacle to be thrown over: Necker. Mirabeau attacked it August 27 by extolling, in opposition to the Minister of Finances, the production of paper money in which he rightly saw the best means for liquidating the national wealth and multiplying small properties. The applause which greeted this address rang the signal for Necker's fall. On September 4, the Assembly learned of the resignation of the formerly great man

with as much indifference as if it had never known his name. The crisis had come. It lasted two months. One after another the Ministers foundered and disappeared with the exception of Montmorin.

During this time Mirabeau wrote note after note to the Queen. He felt that he alone was capable of saving both the Revolution and the monarchy and of keeping order. But each time that he advanced his hand toward power, La Fayette interposed. It was the latter whom Louis XVI consulted, and who chose the successors: de Fleurieu, Duportail, du Tertre de Lessart — shadows.

In vain Mirabeau entreated and adjured the sovereigns to place themselves resolutely in the axis of the Revolution, to call to themselves the men of the Revolution: 'Jacobins become ministers would not be Jacobin ministers.' On October 14, he had drawn up his plan of government in vain: suppression of privileges and exemption from taxes, of the feudal régime, of parliaments, of distinction between the orders, of State lands and provincial bodies; periodic election of legislative bodies charged with making laws and fixing taxes, gratuitous justice, freedom of the press, the responsibility of the Ministers, the sale of the national goods; the constitution of a limited and hereditary monarchy, in which the King would have the disposition of the public forces and would have charge of making the laws respected and of the administration of the nation. In vain had he supplicated the monarch 'to abandon without recourse the former magistracy, the nobility, and the

clergy,' to put himself at the head of the majority in order 'to acquire the right and the means to direct it.' Neither the King nor the Queen understood anything of this. Mirabeau had not succeeded in convincing them any more than the Assembly. They were as much afraid of him as was the Assembly. They only felt reassured when surrounded with mediocrity, which triumphed in all departments of the State. It was the reign of La Fayette.

Put out of power by the contradictory conspiracy of the Revolution and the royalty leagued together in the same mistrust of the same man, Mirabeau isolated himself in his pride.

'Truly, my friend,' he wrote to M. de La Marck, 'I have no desire to give my honor to any one, nor my head to the Court. . . . I am the man for re-establishment of order, and not for the reëstablishment of the former order.'

As he retired from the Court, the Court returned to the aristocrats and the aristocrats to their excesses.

M. de Virieu asked again for the white flag and M. de Foucault cried: 'Leave this new three-colored trinket to the children.'

This time Mirabeau could no longer control himself: 'You so despise the public spirit,' he warned on October 21, 'that you dare to say, in the face of the people who listen to us, that antique prejudices are what must be respected, as if our glory were not having annihilated them, and you say that it is unworthy of the National Assembly to hold to such

bagatelles, as if the language of signs was not everywhere the prime mover of human actions. . . . No, messieurs, the national colors will wave upon the walls, they will win the respect of all countries, not as the insignia of battles and victory, but as that of the saintly brotherhood of friends of liberty over all the earth, and as the terror of conspirators and tyrants.'

This speech horrified the Queen. Mirabeau wished to see her again. She refused. The deputy raged at this couple who, refusing to see and to hear, let themselves be led to the sacrifice, and be treated as 'royal cattle.' For weeks he worried no more about them and returned to the Revolution which welcomed him with rapture. He was applauded at the theater, people signed for his portrait everywhere, and the Jacobins elected him their president on November 30.

Again the Court became frightened. M. de Montmorin sent ambassadors to Mirabeau and engaged him to work with him against La Fayette, whose popularity was sliding little by little to the level of that of Necker. He begged him not to deprive the Queen of his advice and swore that he would busy himself with seeing it properly valued. The deputy let himself be persuaded and addressed to Marie Antoinette on December 23 a forty-seventh sketch of 'the means of reconciling public liberty with royal authority.'

Certain authors have pleased themselves in comparing this tract to the preceding ones and in point-

ing out Mirabeau's inconsistencies. It was not Mirabeau who had changed, it was the situation. The opportunities which offered themselves in July had disappeared in October. The plan which was worth while in October had become unwise in December. From Saint-Cloud one could get to Compiègne or Fontainebleau without scandal. Mirabeau in power would have had means which Mirabeau out of power lacked. Like the leader of an army who digs himself in in a strong position and, without stirring, permits the attacking party to close in, Louis XVI passively watched the horizon of the monarchy shrink from day to day. Mirabeau himself judged the space in which the royalty could still move and once more pointed out to the sovereign the danger of any attempt at counter-revolution: 'Should the kingdom be reconquered, it would still be necessary for the conqueror to adjust himself to public opinion, to assure himself of the good will of the people, to bring about the destruction of abuses, to admit the people to the making of laws, and to permit them to choose his administrators.' He recommended a 'counter-constitution' of a nature to satisfy those who 'praise the Assembly for having destroyed a swarm of abuses and who blame it for having disorganized the whole empire.'

He desired that 'the conduct of the Queen should take another trend, that an enlightened charity should make her agreeable to the multitude to the extent that her personal graces had conquered her entourage for her.'

He advised preparations for the coming election of the Assembly by an intense campaign of letters and pamphlets, by means of money and by means of police. The complete and complicated system was, to tell the truth, suspicious enough to elicit this comment to the Comte de La Marck: 'One would say that this plan had been made for other times and other men. The Cardinal de Retz, for example, would have executed it very well; but we are no longer in the days of the Fronde!'

This 'political pharmacy,' as he himself called it, could not pass as Mirabeau's best work. It was not the work of a free man. At the moment when he was concocting it, according to the admission which escaped him, he was 'equally provided with healthful herbs and poisonous plants,' the subsidies which he had accepted poisoning his thought. He could speak in vain as a master to those who paid him; the money he had received bound him to their service and the more difficult the service became the more equivocal became his conduct in performing it.

It seemed at this hour when, according to Camille Desmoulins, Mirabeau 'fasted with Jacobins, dined with the Société de 1789, and took supper with La Marck and the monarchists,' the great orator sought an excuse for the contradictions into which he found himself thrown, and that, no longer discerning the future clearly, he came to deceive himself so far as to give, as did many others, a Machiavellian air to his hesitation.

Since he had lost the hope of governing France,

his brain no longer held to that supreme equilibrium which constituted his power. A feverish agitation took hold of him and showed itself in January, 1791, in his many interventions, uncontrolled and desultory, on the subjects of the clergy, of the ecclesiastical vow, and the election of bishops. Sometimes he loosed the Assembly against the Church, sometimes he held faith to be 'a very necessary impetus for the patriotic zeal of the people.' His strength from now on seemed to lack direction and control. It hurled down and raised up obstacles in passing, played with the elements and precipitated catastrophes. Sometimes the tempest culminated in a crisis of tears. M. de La Marck heard him groan: 'Alas! What harm I did in my youth to the common weal!' On other days physical suffering tore him. In kissing his young niece du Saillant, he said to her: 'Death kisses the springtime.' He threw himself into pleasure with the frenzy of a condemned man on his last day, turned from Mme. Le Jay to a singer of the Italian theater, Signorina Morichelli, from her to mistresses of a day, to dancers of a supper, to adventures of an hour. When his secretary Pellenc suggested discretion, reminding him that he was, after all, but one man:

'You are right,' he replied, 'but it has not long been so, because I was once the equal of ten good men.'

At his table, which was always surrounded by guests, the fare was both rich and 'so incendiary' as one of his women friends, Armande Rolland, tells

us: 'I almost always spat blood when I had dined at Mirabeau's.' The irregularities of his life expanded at the beginning of 1791 into a supreme disorder in which was mingled work, festivals, tortures of the body, agonies of the mind and the retaliations of popularity.

The insults of 1790 served as a preface to the glory which, at the approach of death, enveloped him and raised him even then above the earth. When he went to the Assembly in his blue striped coach, the people applauded him along the streets. His colleagues surrounded him with an entirely new respect. His former enemies made him honorable amends. His name was repeated in the provinces, in foreign countries. He had become, in the eyes of all, such as he was to appear to Goethe: 'The Hercules of the Revolution.' Popular homage and political success both came to him at once. On January 18 he was elected leader of the National Guard Battalion from his district, the Chaussée d'Antin, in spite of the opposition of La Fayette; on January 28 the Assembly unanimously applauded from the Right to the Left the report which he presented in the name of the diplomatic committee. The next day he was named President of the National Assembly.

Then peace came within him as around him. Suddenly he won again his serenity and his strength. To the deputations which succeeded one another, he used superb language which moved them, intimidated them and ravished them. Every one recog-

nized him as the leader. He was the chosen sovereign of the French people.

A last tumult was caused by the departure of Mesdames for Rome on February 19. Mirabeau foresaw it and advised the King to ask the deputies himself for a decree fixing his rights over the members of his family. The King did not listen to him. The Assembly became indignant. The question of emigration was raised. There was a demand for a law prohibiting it. Mirabeau set himself against the passage of the bill. He invoked liberty. 'Man is not held by roots in the earth.' The emotion of the moment laughed at liberty. The deputies howled at Mirabeau. What was to become of his popularity? Bravely he risked it all. 'The popularity that has been my ambition,' he exclaimed, 'and which I have had the honor to enjoy like another, is not a feeble reed. It is in the earth that I wish to plant its roots, on the imperturbable foundation of reason and liberty! If you make a law against emigrants, I swear never to obey it!'

As a group of Jacobins revolted and cried that this was dictatorship, he stood up again and shouted his famous cry of fury and disdain:

'Silence, you thirty voices!'

But the riots were started in Paris. Mirabeau hurried to the Directory and made it adopt a proclamation to the people: 'Do you conserve your laws in violating them yourselves?' He learned that charges were to be preferred against him in the Jacobin Club. He went there. Duport denounced

him, Lameth declared him as dangerous for the Revolution as Cazalès and Maury. They wanted to forbid him the rostrum, to drive him from the room. He took control of the one and of the other, imperiously forced his adversaries to submit. It seems that his eloquence at the Club as at the Assembly, from morning until evening of that terrible day of February 29, burned with its brightest flame: 'I shall be one of you until I am ostracized,' he said in concluding.

Never had the great orator appeared so assured of his strength. On March 27, 1791, in a debate on the mines, he appeared on the rostrum five times in order to force the acceptance of his theory.

On Tuesday, March 29, the news spread in Paris that Mirabeau was going to die.

In the Tuileries Mme. Campan believed she saw a tear in the eyes of the Queen.

CHAPTER XXI

The Last Storm

For some days the attacks of pain and fever to which he had been prey for a long time had been recurring at shorter and shorter intervals. On March 28 he had returned in haste from his new property in the Marais, near to Argenteuil, where, in that year of 1791, he had hoped to attend the rebirth of nature which he loved with the love of a former prisoner, long deprived of air and flowers.

His doctor, Cabanis, who had more wit than science, had him take a bath as his only treatment. Calmed for a while, Mirabeau thought himself cured and wished to go to the Italian theater to hear Morichelli once more.

There he was again taken with his pains. He had to spend so much effort and time in coming out of his box and dragging himself along the Chaussée d'Antin to his residence, and he underwent so many crises that he believed he would die before arriving. Cabanis, who was called immediately, found him 'almost suffocating, breathing with the greatest difficulty, his face swollen . . . his pulse intermittent and convulsive, making vain efforts to hold back the moans which his pain tore from him.'

'Hurry, my friend,' Mirabeau said to him. 'This cannot last.'

Narcotics quieted him. He remained until the

next evening in a sort of gasping torpor. At this time he found himself able to breathe again, smiled and believed himself revived. Under the windows a happy murmur arose. It was the response of the people to whom a reassuring bulletin had been read.

Wednesday morning, March 30, it was learned that the convulsions had recommenced during the night. Despair took hold of Paris. Anxious groups gathered everywhere. The rumor that he had been poisoned spread. Each quarter of the city sent him messages. The life of the capital seemed to hang upon his own. Health bulletins had to be printed. People tore them from one another and ran off with them. The deputations succeeded one another. Barnave came at the head of that of the Jacobins. Mirabeau could receive no one. His agony stopped only for an instant towards evening.

The night was atrocious. Thursday morning Cabanis took fright and had a surgeon called. Mirabeau was bled. They multiplied the blistering plasters, the plasters of cantharides, they nourished him with grains of musk. Useless efforts. The mask of death was on his face. He understood and stopped struggling.

As if the tumult of his life was suddenly over, he appeared tranquil, ordered them to let his sister du Saillant enter, his secretaries Frochot, Pellenc, De Comps, and his friend the Comte de La Marck.

These friends urged him to see other physicians than Cabanis. He refused, as though he were tired of living.

'When will my fate be determined?'

'Saturday morning,' said Cabanis.

It was then Thursday evening.

Friday morning, April 1, he consented, however, to a consultation. His pulse had become imperceptible. His arms and hands were icy. He was suffocating. His mind alone remained clear.

'Tell me the truth,' he said. 'I am able to bear it.'

'I think that we will save you,' replied the consulting physician. 'But I cannot guarantee it.'

After the departure of Dr. Petit, Mirabeau confided to Cabanis:

'What he says is severe. I understand. You are less decided. I am inclined to agree with him, but it would please me more to believe as you do.'

Then he had his notary called and drew up his will. He showed M. de La Marck the secretary in which he kept his notes to the Queen. M. de La Marck carried them away.

Sometime before the two friends had had a discussion as to what was the most beautiful death. 'Well, connoisseur of beautiful deaths, are you satisfied?' asked Mirabeau.

He did not wish any one but his secretary Frochot to move him in his bed because his gentleness pleased him.

'Raise up my head,' he said. And he added, 'I would like to be able to leave you it as a heritage.'

Talleyrand, with whom he had broken off since

the publication of *l'Histoire secrète de la cour de Berlin*, was announced. Mirabeau wished to receive him without witnesses.

'If a priest should come to offer me his assistance, tell him that I am with his superior, the Bishop d'Autun,' he smiled.

For two hours he kept his old friend whom he had wished to make Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Revolution, and charged him with the duty of reading on the rostrum after his death the last discourse that he had prepared.

Then he seemed to see nothing more. Great spasms shook him. At 8.30 o'clock in the evening the cannon sounded. He gave a start.

'Are these already the funeral ceremonies of Achilles?' he cried. And he began to talk again. He talked feverishly almost all the night, blowing continually as though on the fire in a forge. One would have believed that the National Assembly, the King, the Queen, and foreign statesmen were present around him. He addressed himself to them turn by turn:

'This Pitt,' he said, 'is the minister of preparation. He governs rather with what he threatens than what he does. If I had lived, I believe that I would have brought him to grief.'

He said again: 'I go wearing mourning for the Monarchy.'

He entered into the future.

At four o'clock in the morning he asked for the secretary, M. De Comps, who lived in the house.

When the latter heard the knock on his door he believed that they had come to announce his master's death to him and stabbed himself five times with a knife in the neck and the breast. He fell fainting in his blood. This was only one of the demonstrations of the universal sorrow. Weeping crowds gathered at the two ends of the street which had been blocked. A young man came to offer his blood. Paris was drunk with devotion and love. The King had the news of the dying brought to him twice a day. 'We should be obliged to Louis XVI,' was written in the *Révolutions de Paris*, 'for not presenting himself in person. This step would have made him idolized and would have brought about a vexatious diversion for patriotism.'

On the morning of Saturday, April 2, Mirabeau announced to Cabanis:

'My friend, I shall die to-day.'

He called his valet and asked to be shaved. The sky was blue. Springtime came in at the windows. Mirabeau ordered his bed pushed near a window, as he wished to see once more the trees in his garden. And when his valet cried, 'Ah! monsieur, ah! my dear master, I wish very much that you were in my place'; he replied: 'Indeed, I don't wish that you were in mine.'

Cabanis could not control his sobs.

'No weakness unworthy of you and of me,' said Mirabeau. 'It is a moment which we must both know how to enjoy. Give me your word that you will not let me suffer from useless pain. I wish

nothing to spoil my enjoyment of the presence of those I love.'

His friends crowded into the room. He gave them his last counsel. When he could no longer talk, he took the hand of his secretary Frochot and put it in that of M. de La Marck. His eyes ran over the faces of those who surrounded him and smiled to them. If any one leaned over the bed to watch his breathing, his lips formed a kiss.

The end of the day approached. The pangs of death, stilled until then, became frightful.

Mirabeau made a sign that he wished to write and traced on the paper this single phrase:

'To sleep.'

He begged for opium. Toward evening, the fury of his suffering gave him back his strength. His assistants felt for an instant that they saw him again as he had been on the rostrum on his days of anger. He stretched out his fist and cried:

'Ah! Doctors, doctors.'

Then turning his terrible face towards Cabanis: 'Are you not my doctor and my friend? Did you not promise to save me from the pain of such a death? Do you wish me to carry away regret for having given you my confidence?'

His eyes grew large. A supreme convulsion straightened him. He fell down on his right side. Eight-thirty sounded.

'He suffers no longer,' announced Dr. Petit.

The night of April 2 to 3 was like a riot in the capital. People shouted, wept, threatened and shot

off muskets at random. The Colossus had been carried off in five days by a mysterious sickness which the doctors had not succeeded in defining clearly. Was this not a proof of crime? The multitude believed it and dreamed of vengeance. An autopsy had to be held but it convinced no one for the savants were, as always, divided into two camps.

The next day the department of Paris presented itself before the Assembly and proposed, through the voice of its president, the Duc de La Rochefoucauld, to consecrate the church of Sainte-Geneviève as the sepulcher for great men and to take there the first illustrious dead of the new era. On April 4 the decree was adopted, unanimously, with three not voting.

The same day at five o'clock in the evening the funeral cortège began to move in the rue de la Chaussée d'Antin.

Three hundred thousand men followed the body which was carried by twelve sergeants of the National Guard. At eight o'clock there was a halt before Saint-Eustache where the religious ceremony took place. At ten o'clock in the evening this multitude started marching again for the Panthéon, unrolling its tragic celebration in the night to the sound of drums, funeral marches, cannon shots, and the immense, dull tread of the populace.

Mirabeau's body was, as the Assembly had decided, placed in a vault of the 'former church of Sainte-Geneviève.'

Then the people slipped away without a sound.

Three years later, upon a report of Marie-Joseph Chénier revealing the discoveries in Louis XVI's iron safe, the Convention, 'considering that a man without virtue could not be great,' ordered that the body of Honoré-Gabriel Riquetti Mirabeau be withdrawn from the French Panthéon and that that of Marat should be put in its place.'

On September 21, 1794, an officer of the Convention read the decree on the threshold of the Panthéon. Mirabeau was excluded from the pardon of Thermidor.

At the close of the same day, during a night exactly like that of his last triumph, the body was covered with earth in an unmarked and unnamed ditch in the old cemetery of Clamart where it has never been found. The storm which began with the life of Mirabeau swept away even his remains.

THE END

INDEX

INDEX

Agriculture, and 'The Friend of Man,' 18–20
Aiguillon, Emmanuel-A., Duc d', 169, 192
Aix, *M.* visits his uncle at, 52, 54; effect in, of *M.*'s return to Provence, 141; determination to boycott *M.* at, 142; trial of suits between *M.* and his wife at, 145, 146; court of, decides in *M.*'s favor, 146; *M.*'s visit to, in Jan., 1789, causes an explosion of terror, 193; controversies in, over *M.*'s presence at meeting of States of Provence, 194, 195; *M.*'s welcome in (March, 1789), 199; revolt in, quelled by *M.*, 201; *M.* chosen to States-General from, 202. And *see* Provence
Albertas, M. d', 71
Alègre, M., governor of Château d'If, tries to secure *M.*'s release, 85, 86
Alembert, Jean la Rond d', 18
Aligre, President d', 185
Amelot, M., signs warrant for *M.*'s imprisonment, 108
American Colonies, loss of, 156
Ami des Hommes, L', sobriquet of the Marquis de Mirabeau. *See* Mirabeau, Victor Riquetti, Marquis de
Ami du Peuple, L', 268
Amsterdam, *M.*'s laborious life in, 110–12
Antraigues, Comte d', 160, 167, 169
Aragon, Marquise d', *M.*'s niece, 235
Arrighetti, the (Riquetti), 8, 10, 14
Artois, Comte d' (afterwards Charles X), 230, 258
Aulan, Bailiff of, governor of the Île de Ré, experiences of, with *M.* as a prisoner, 39 ff.; induces *M.*'s father to consent to *M.*'s joining the Corsican expedition, 46

Bachaumont, Louis de, 37, 38
Bailly, Jean-S., named provisional president of the National Assembly, 222; mentioned, 226, 231
Baraud, M., 181
Barentin, M. de, Keeper of the Seals, 207, 230
Barnave, Joseph, opposes *M.* in the Assembly, 262–64; mentioned, 280
Barry, Jeanne Béçu, Comtesse du, 63, 64
Barthou, Louis, quoted on *M.*'s writings on music, 112
Bastille, the, fall of, 229
Baudeau, Abbé, 26, 27
Bayreuth, Margrave of, 53
Beaumarchais, Pierre-A. Caron de, 146, 164, 198
Beaumont, communal election at, 69
Berlin, *M.* in (1785 and 1786), 170–75; *M.*'s secret correspondence from, published, 197, 198
Bertier, M., 230
Bignon, château of, *M.*'s birth at (1749), 1 ff.; *M.*'s father exiled

to, on publication of his *Théorie de l'Impôt*, 30
Birons, M. des, *M.*'s attorney, 137
Boccaccio, Giovanni, 120
Bolle, Mme., 108
Bossuet, Jacques-Bénigne, 204
Boucher, M., the 'good angel' at Vincennes, 121, 127, 131, 134
Bouillé, M. de, 267
Bourdaloue, Louis, 204
Bourrasque, M. le Comte de, name applied to *M.*, 67
Boyer, M., 69, 70
Breteuil, Baron Louis-A. de, orders *M.* to be confined at Ham, 181; mentioned, 158, 183, 184
Briançon, M. de, 79, 86, 106, 108, 109, 126
Brienne, Loménie de, succeeds Calonne, 184, 185; mentioned, 190
Brissot de Warville, M., 163
Broglie, Victor-F., Maréchal de, 228, 230
Brosses, Charles, President des, 88
Broussonet, M., 207
Bruguières, M. de, police inspector, in Amsterdam, obtains order for extradition of *M.*, 113; arrests *M.* and Sophie de Monnier, and takes them to Paris, 113; mentioned, 108, 112, 118
Brunswick, Duke of, 183
Buffon, G.-L. Leclerc de, 88
Burke, Edmund, 157

Cabanis, Dr. Georges, and *M.*'s last illness, 279, 280, 281, 283, 284
Cabarrus, François, Comte de, 163
Cabris, Louise Riquetti, Marquise de, *M.*'s sister, their close companionship, 54–57; her history and character, 56; and the Mirabeau-Villeneuve affair, 78, 79; assists *M.* to escape from Dijon, 107; exiled from Paris, 114; mentioned, 54, 57, 86, 105, 109, 124, 126
Cabris, Marquis de, his scandalous exploit and its sequel, 78, 79; mentioned, 56
Caillaux, M., 162
Calissane, M. de, 147
Calonne, Charles-A. de, his ambition to win the Queen's confidence, 161, 162; his interview with *M.*, 162, 163; suggests *M.*'s writing against the Bank of Saint-Charles, 163, then disavows the book, 164; relations of, with *M.*, 165, 166, 168, 169; his dilemma and *M.*'s proposed remedy, 166; renewed harmony between, and *M.*, 170; and the institution of a National Assembly, 177; difference between his understanding of the plan and *M.*'s, 177, 178; burned in effigy, 184; mentioned, 159, 180, 181, 183, 191
Cambronne, General Pierre, 225
Campan, Jeanne Louise, 266, 278
Caraman, M. de, military governor of Provence, appeals to *M.*, 200, 201
Cassano, battle of, described by *M.* aged five, 14
Castagny, Abbé, 54
Castellane, Mlle. de, 7, 8
Caumont, Marquis de, 71, 73
Cazalès, Jacques de, 261, 278
Chabrillant, M. de, 73
Chamfort, de (Nicolas-S. Roch), 158
Chenier, Louis-S. de, 229
Chenier, Marie-J., 286

Choiseul, Étienne-F., Duc de, 42, 45, 46
Choquard, Abbé, letter of, to *M.*'s father on *M.*'s conduct at his boarding-school, 35–37; effect of *M.*'s eloquence on, 36, 37
Cincinnati, Order of the, *M.* writes a pamphlet against, 158
Clamart, *M.*'s body placed in an unmarked grave in cemetery of, 286
Clavière, Étienne, dreams of succeeding Necker, 159; his high opinion of *M.*, 159, 160; introduces *M.* to Calonne, 162; mentioned, 163, 167, 168, 214
Clavière, Mme., 159
Clergy, the, majority of, decide to join the Third Estate, 224. And *see* Privileged orders.
Coco, *M.*'s adopted son, 152, 154, 170
Coigny, Marquise de, 169, 176
Condé, Prince de, Bachaumont on *M.*'s eulogy of, 37, 38; mentioned, 258
Condorcet, Antoine-N. de, 192
Condorcet, Mme. de, 265
Conti, Prince de, 191, 257
Corsica, expedition to, 44, 46; *M.*'s history of, 48, 54
Council of State, prohibits publication of unlicensed periodicals, 209; condemns *M.*'s *Journal des États-Généraux*, 209
Croze, Mme. de, 71, 73

De Comps, M., *M.*'s secretary, kills himself on *M.*'s death, 283; mentioned, 197, 280, 282
Desmoulins, Camille, 240, 274
Diderot, Denis, 18
Dijon, *M.* and Sophie de Monnier at, 101 ff.; *M.* temporarily detained in prison at, 105
Discount Bank, the (later the Bank of France), created by Panchaud, 164
Dreux-Brezé, Marquis de, *M.*'s dispute with, in the Assembly, 225, 226
Dufort, Mme. de, 65
Dumont, Étienne, 214, 227, 231, 238
Dupont de Nemours, Pierre-S., visits *M.* at Vincennes, 122–24; mentioned, 125, 126, 127, 131, 133, 134
Duport, M., denounces *M.* as a traitor, 268; mentioned, 238, 277
Duportail, M., 270
Duroveray, M., 214

Elliot, Gilbert, *M.*'s visit to, at Bath, 155
Elliot, Mrs. Gilbert, 155
Elliot, Henrietta, 155
Elliot, Hugh, 154, 155
'Emigration,' *M.* opposes proposed law to prohibit, 277
England, *M.*'s visit to (1784), 155 ff.; state of affairs in, 155-57; her humiliation before France, 156
English, the, *M.* quoted on character of, 157, 158
Espagnac, Abbé d', 181
Esprémesnil, Jean-Jacques Duval d', 184, 186
Esprit des Journaux, L', 122
Esterno, M. d', 171
Eugene, Prince, 7

Fauche, M., bookseller at Geneva, 139, 140
Favras, Thomas de Mahy, Marquis de, 252
Fersen, Axel de, 169
Flesselles, Jacques de, death of, 229

Fleurieu, Charles-P., Comte de, 270
Fontanges, M. de, 257
Foucault, M. de, 271
Foulon, M., murder of, 230, 268
Fox, Charles James, 157
France, *M.*'s plans for form of government of, in 1789, 213 ff.; *M.*'s view of affairs in, 231, 232; and his plan of a constitution for, 232, 234; *M.*'s plans for government of, after the King's surrender at Versailles, 245 ff.; *M.*'s plans for government of (Oct., 1790) come to naught, 270, 271
Francueil, M. de, 66
Frederick II (the Great), and *M.*, 170; death of, 171; mentioned, 172, 173, 174
Frederick William II, of Prussia, *M.* undertakes to teach him how to govern, 171–73; his character, 173, 174; and *M.*'s secret correspondence from Berlin, 197, 198
Free-Masonry, *M.* and, 111
French Ministry, wrongheadedness of, 185, 186, 187
French Revolution, the, actual beginning of, 224–26; the most critical moment of (Feb., 1790), 251
Fréron, Louis-M.-S., 268
Friend of Man, The. *See* Ami des Hommes, L'
Frochot, M., *M.*'s secretary, 280, 281, 284

Galiffet, Comte de, and *M.*'s return to Mirabeau, 141 ff.; *M.*'s duel with, 150
Gamaches, Comte de, 247
Gassaud, Mme. de, 77
Gassaud, M. de, 77
Gassaud, M. de, son of the above, seduces *M.*'s wife, 75, 76; and is forgiven by *M.*, 77; letter of *M.*'s wife to, 148, 149; mentioned, 83, 84
George III, 156, 157
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 276
Goetz, Herr von, 198
Grammont, M. de, 73
Gras, Mlle. de, suspected of poisoning Victor de Mirabeau, 116, 123
Grenou, Edmé, called Lafleur, gardener at Gien, 129
Grévin, M., letter of, to *M.*'s father on *M.*'s conduct as an officer, 38; mentioned, 40, 42
Guémenée, Princesse de, 66
Guilhermy, M. de, 268
Guise, Duc de, 241

Hardy, M., *M.*'s secretary, 158
Hausset, Mme. du, 27
Henry, Prince, of Prussia, demands prosecution of *M.*, 198; mentioned, 171
Hesse-Cassel, Landgrave of, hires mercenaries to England for the American war, 110
Hessian mercenaries, *M.* urges them to revolt, 110
Holland, States-General of, authorize arrest of *M.*, 113
Honoré, Monsieur, name assumed by *M.* on his release from Vincennes, 127, 132 ff.
Hozier, Charles d', 10

If, Château d', *M.* imprisoned in (1774), 79, 80, 81 ff.; his partisans at, 85, 86; the canteen man and woman at, 85, 86; *M.* removed from, to Fort de Joux, 86

Jacobin Club, charges preferred against *M.* in, 277; mentioned, 262
Jeanret, peddler, tries to help Sophie de Monnier to join *M.*, 107
Joannis, M. de, 82
John II, 120
Joly de Fleury, G.-F., 162
Joseph II, Emperor, 158, 265
Journal des États-Généraux, *M.* brings out first number of, 204, 205; effect of its appearance, 205, 206; denounced to the King by ministers, 206, 207; condemned by the Council and ordered suppressed, 209; reappears under a new title, 209. See *Lettres du Comte de Mirabeau*
Journal Encyclopédique de Bouillon, 18
Joux, Fort de, *M.*'s imprisonment at, 86 ff.

La Fare, Monseigneur de, preaches at opening mass of States-General, 204
La Fayette, Marie-Joseph, Marquis de, at Versailles, Oct. 5, 1789, 241, 242; plan to reconcile *M.* with, 264, 265; always an obstacle in *M.*'s attempts to save the situation, 270, 271; his diminishing popularity, 272; mentioned, 192, 238, 247, 251, 252, 253, 267, 276
La Marck, Comte de, and the attempted reconciliation between *M.* and the Queen, 253 ff.; mentioned, 238, 239, 240, 242, 245, 246, 251, 269, 271, 274, 275, 280, 281, 284
La Rochefoucault, Duc de, 192
La Tour, M. de, 200
La Tour du Pin, M. de, 242
La Tour-Roumoules, Mme. de, 78
La Tour-Roumoules, Mlle. de, 106
La Valette, M. de, 71, 73
La Vauguyon, Duc de, 113
La Vrillière, Duc de, 82, 103, 104
Lambert, Colonel Marquis de, and *M.*, 40, 41
Lambesc (Provence), 199
Lameth, Théodore de, 278
Lamoignon, M. de, 186, 187, 258
Lancefoudras, Marquis de, name assumed by *M.* at Dijon, 102 and *n.*, 103, 104
Langres, Bishop of, 242
Lanjuinais, Jean-D., brings about *M.*'s defeat in the Assembly, 249, 250
Launay, Bernard-R., Marquis de, governor of the Bastille, murder of, 229
Lauzun, Duc de, declares *M.* to be in love with the Queen, 168; mentioned, 66, 160, 167, 192
Law, John, 163
Le Couteulx de la Noraye, M., 164
Le Jay, M., bookseller, publishes *M.*'s secret correspondence from Berlin, 197
Le Jay, Mme., *M.*'s liaison with, 196; persuades *M.* to publish his secret correspondence, 197; mentioned, 275
'League for Abuses, the,' 133
Leblanc de Castillon, M., denounces *M.* to the ministry, 144
Legrain, *M.*'s valet, 137, 138, 139
Lenoir, Pierre, Lieutenant-General of Police, and *M.*, 118, 119, 121, 122
Leroux, M., 212
Lesage, servant of M. de Monnier, 112

Lettres du Comte de Mirabeau à ses Commettants, new title of the *Journal des États-Généraux*, 209; copies of, and presses, seized, 209; prosecution of, dropped, 209
Literature, *M.*'s youthful attitude toward, 33
Loménie, Louis de, 181, 252
Lorraine, Legion of, *M.*'s connection with, 46, 62
Louis XV, 25, 27, 28, 63, 65
Louis XVI, his weakness led him to tyranny, 187; suspends session of States of Provence, 195; at the first session of the States-General, 207, 208; his feeling toward *M.*, 215; proclaims anew the distinction between the orders, 224, 225; yields to *M.*'s insistence, 226; his reply to *M.*'s address of July 8, 1789, 230; and the invasion of the National Assembly by the women of Paris, 242 ff.; yields to the mob and is escorted by it to Paris, 244; *M.*'s plan for removing him and his family from Paris, 245, 246; and the question of financial aid to *M.*, 258, 259; believes that he has bought *M.*, 259; seeks to bring *M.* and La Fayette together, 264, 265; consults La Fayette after Necker's fall, 270; disregards *M.*'s advice as to his rights over members of his family, 277; the discoveries in his iron safe, 286; mentioned, 83, 87, 90, 107, 127, 132, 173, 181, 185, 186, 190, 198, 203, 204, 206, 217, 227, 231, 238, 239, 240, 241, 251, 254, 256, 257, 267, 271, 283

Mâcon, Chevalier de, assists *M.* to escape from château of Dijon, 107
Malesherbes, C.-G. de Lamoignon de, showered with petitions for and against *M.*, orders his imprisonment at Dijon, to await the decision of a commission, which recommends his further detention, 105; his fall from power fatal to *M.*'s hopes, 105; mentioned, 106, 108
Malleroy, name assumed by Sophie de Monnier at convent of Gien, 121
Malouet, Pierre-V., *M.* induces him to help win Necker to his plan, 217, 218; mentioned, 213
Manosque, *M.* exiled to, 75
Marat, Jean-Paul, his body substituted for *M.*'s in the Panthéon, 286
Maria Theresa, Empress, 253
Marie Antoinette, Queen, and *M.*'s pamphlet about the Scheldt, 158; *M.* said by Lauzun to be in love with, 168, 169; her feeling toward *M.*, 215, 239; accused by *M.* of counter-revolutionary designs, 240, 241; Mercy-d'Argenteau seeks to effect a reconciliation between *M.* and, 253 ff.; *M.*'s letter to, 255, 256; their 'near honeymoon,' 257; and the question of *M.*'s 'allowance,' 258, 259; pleased by *M.*'s triumph in the Assembly, 264; and the plan to bring *M.* and La Fayette together, 265; wishes Emperor Joseph to make a demonstration on the French frontier, 265, 266; her interview with *M.* at Saint-Cloud, 266–68; *M.*'s further intercourse with, 269, 270; refuses to see *M.*

again, 272; and *M.*'s sketch of the means of reconciling public liberty with the royal authority, 272–74; mentioned, 161, 162, 168, 184, 203, 207, 227, 238, 242, 244, 245, 271, 278
Marignane, Émilie de, to desire to marry her was the fashion, 71; *M.* seduces her, 72, and marries her, 73. And *see* Mirabeau, Émilie, Comtesse de
Marignane, Mme. de, 71, 72, 74
Marignane, Marquis de, *M.*'s father-in-law, his house guarded against *M.*, 144; *M.* on life in his household, 147, 148; mentioned, 71, 73, 83, 104, 115, 116, 126, 142, 143, 146
Marseilles, enthusiasm over *M.* at, 199, 200; he calms the revolution in, 200, 201; elects *M.* to States-General, 202
Maurepas, Jean-F. de, on the scandals in the Mirabeau family, 126, 127; mentioned, 132, 133
Maury, Abbé, 261, 278
Mauvillon, Major, *M.*'s friend in Berlin, 174, 176, 179, 183, 184, 188, 189, 190, 191, 198, 223, 248
Menus Plaisirs, Salle des, first meeting of States-General in, 206–08; Third Estate meets alone in, at second session, 211–13
Mercy-d'Argenteau, Comte de, Austrian Ambassador in Paris, seeks to reconcile the Queen and *M.*, 253 ff.; mentioned, 264, 266, 269
Mesdames de France (the King's aunts), leave Paris for Rome, 277
Michaud, Jeanneton, *M.*'s relations with, 92, 94
Michaud, M., attorney at Aix, 92, 104, 137
Mirabeau, Boniface L. Riquetti, Vicomte de, *M.*'s brother, 30, 31; his proposal to exclude members of the National Assembly from its successor, rejected, 236, 237; his career, 236; represents the Limousin in the Assembly, 236; his relations with *M.*, 237; mentioned, 20, 59, 243
Mirabeau, Émilie, Comtesse de, *M.*'s wife, her *dot*, 74; seduced by M. de Gassaud, 75, 76; is forgiven by *M.*, 76, 77; is sent to Mirabeau to induce the Marquis to arrange a compromise with *M.*'s creditors, etc., 81; how she carried out her mission, 82; *M.*'s letter to, asking her to share his captivity, 83, 84; refuses *M.*'s proposal to fly with him to a foreign country, 93; effect of her son's death on, 115; seeks to return to *M.*'s family, but is induced to remain with her father, 116; the Chevalier's idea of reuniting her and her husband, 116, 117; Dupont seeks to bring about a reconciliation between them, 123, 124; as a grass-widow at Aix, 141, 142; and *M.*'s return to Provence, 142 ff.; proposes to 'defend her liberty,' 143, 144; *M.* seeks to compel her to join him, 145; her letters to *M.* published by him, 145; trial of the suit between them, 145, 146; appeals from the decision of the court at Aix, 146 ff.; *M.* demands that she be placed

in a convent, 147; her letter to M. de Gassaud read in court by *M.*, 148; the puzzle of her last hours at the Château of Mirabeau, 150; her suit against *M.* finally decided in her favor, 154; the populace of Aix appeals to, to return to *M.*, 199; mentioned, 80, 86, 124, 125, 126, 134

MIRABEAU, GABRIEL-HONORÉ, COMTE DE, birth of, at the Château de Bignon, 1–3; born tongue-tied and club-footed, 4 and *n.*; describes the battle of Cassano to the servants, after hearing his father's description, 14; his childish eloquence, 14, 15; why his father punished him, 16, 17; accompanies his father to Versailles, to visit Quesnay, 21 ff.; Poisson, his tutor, seeks to be relieved of his task, and why, 31, 32; compelled to assume the name of Pierre-Buffière, 32, 33; M. de Sigrais, his next tutor, makes a similar appeal, 32–34; Abbé Choquard's letter to the Marquis de Mirabeau concerning his son's bad conduct, 35–37; Bachaumont quoted on his first speech, 38; confined at the Île de Ré, abuses the liberty allowed him, 39 ff.; desires to join the expedition to Corsica, 44, 45; is attached to the Legion of Lorraine as second lieutenant, 46; returns to the Château of Mirabeau, 47; under what conditions his father allowed him to return, 48, 49; his relations with his uncle, 50; joins his uncle at Aix, 51; his early amorous adventures, 52–54; his uncle's admiration of his talent, 54, 55; his uncle is allowed to receive him at Mirabeau, 55; relations with his sister, Madame de Cabris, 55–57; is received by his father at the Château of Aigueperse, 57; his father desires him to negotiate between the various warring members of the family, 59, 60; effect of his mother's confidences to him, 60, 61; the name of Mirabeau restored to him, 61; is commissioned captain in the Legion of Lorraine, 62; how he tried to combine liberalism with the feudal system, 62

At Versailles, to be presented, 63 ff.; snubbed by Madame du Barry, 64; his cold reception by the King, 65; upsets the dignity of the Court, 65; what he learned at Versailles, 66; his first meeting with Talleyrand, 66, 67; returns to Mirabeau, to deal with an insurrection there, 67 ff.; the Boyer incident and its effect, 69, 70; meets Mlle. de Marignane in Provence, 71; seduces her, 72, and marries her, 73; his accounts show nothing but debts, 73; his wife's small *dot*, 73, 74; resorts to borrowing, 74; birth of his son Victor, 75; his father obtains warrant of imprisonment without trial against him, under which he is confined at Mirabeau, 75; subjected to an interdict, 75; how he dealt with his wife's seducer, M. de Gassaud, 75–77; is involved in the troubles of his sister de Cabris, 78; his encounter with M. de Villeneuve, 79; on the latter's complaint, he

is imprisoned in the Château d'If, 79, 80; prospects of escape, 81, 82; his father's views concerning him, 82; asks his wife to share his captivity, 83, 84; effect of his wife's betrayal and ingratitude upon his feelings, 84, 85; his partisans at the château, 85, 86; removed to the Fort de Joux, 86; welcomed as a guest by Saint-Mauris, the commander, and allowed full liberty, 87 ff.; sells his *Essai sur le despotisme* in Switzerland, 87, 97, 98; meets Sophie de Monnier, 87 ff.; her memory kept alive by Saint-Mauris, 89, 90; his relations with Jeanneton Michaud, 92; letter to his father, who maintains his severity, 92, 93; urges his wife to fly from France, 93; his relations with Sophie de Monnier renewed, 93 ff.; ordered to return to the Fort de Joux, he disappears, 98; in Sophie de Monnier's apartments, 99; his false explanation to her husband, 99, 100; follows Sophie to Dijon, 101; at the provost-marshal's ball, 102; announced as the Marquis de Lancefoudras, 102; his interview with the provost-marshal, 102–04; ordered to be confined in the Château of Dijon, pending the Ministry's decision as to arbitrary warrants, 104, 105; on the adverse decision, is ordered to be detained ten months at Doullens, 105; determines to fly with Sophie, 105, 106; makes his escape to Switzerland, 107, while Sophie is confined in France, 107, 108; his father's comment on his adventures, 108; at last, Sophie joins him at Verrières, 108; at Amsterdam, 109 ff.; seeks employment with booksellers there, 110; publishes an appeal to the Hessian mercenaries, bought by England to fight in America, to revolt, 110; publishes his *Mémoire concernant une association intime*, etc., containing an outline of his plan of revolution, 111; and Free Masonry, 111; intervenes in the suit between his father and mother, and publishes a pamphlet against the former, 111, 112; writes on musical criticism, 112; his retreat soon discovered, 112; sued by M. de Monnier for rape and adultery, 112; condemned to be beheaded for rape by seduction, 112; his extradition from Holland ordered, 113; confined in the Château of Vincennes, 114 ff.; effect of his son's death, 117, 118; correspondence with Sophie de Monnier, 118, 119; always reading and writing, 120; his *Essai sur l'inoculation*, 120; his *Lettres et les prisons d'État*, 120; effect of solitude upon his temperament, 120, 121; his life at Vincennes, 121, 122; is visited by M. Dupont on a mission of conciliation, 122, 123; the ensuing negotiations with father, wife, and the rest, 124; effect upon him of the death of his daughter by Sophie, 124, 125; the beginning of the end between him and Sophie, 125, 126; his unhappiness in his prison, 126; his father obtains a new arbitrary warrant, authorizing

him to fix his residence, 127; is at last released after 42 months, 127; his condition when released, 128, 129

Joins Sophie at Gien, 129 ff.; their intercourse confirms his desire to be free, 131; on learning of further pursuit, goes to Paris, 132; takes the name of M. Honoré, 132; is reconciled with his father, 133 ff.; lives with him at Bignon, 135–37; his father's impression of him, 135, 136; goes to Pontarlier to seek revocation of the sentence against him, and voluntarily gives himself up, 137; effect of his return in the city, 137; his violent behavior, 138, 139; the sentence pronounced void, 139; returns to society by 'breaking in,' 139; his poverty relieved by sale of books, 139, 140; writes to Vergennes on the question of Geneva, 140; returns to the Château of Mirabeau, 140, 141; his return welcomed joyfully there, 141, but with horror at Aix, 141 ff.; a boycott against him organized, 142; his uncle's admiration of him, 143; his father-in-law's house guarded against him, 144; his father's letters of abuse used to his prejudice, 145, 147; the suit between him and his wife tried at Aix, and decided in his favor, 145, 146; upon appeal to the Parliament of Aix, the decision is reversed, 146–50; his address in his own behalf, 147–49

In Paris in the autumn of 1783, 151; his father resigns his paternal authority to the King, 151; demands the accounts of his father's guardianship, and bases a suit upon them, 151; appeals from the decision of the Parliament of Aix, 151; writes against M. de Miromesnil, 151; obtains funds from his mother, 152; his luxurious life in Paris, 152; adopts a child (Coco), 152; his liaison with Mme. de Nehra, 152 ff.; his appeal denied, 154; visits Elliot in England, 154, 155; his interest in the state of affairs there, 157, 158; writes on Holland's side in the matter of the liberty of the river Scheldt, to the exasperation of Marie Antoinette, 158; Mme. de Nehra smooths affairs over for him, 158, 159; through Clavière and Panchaud, comes into relations with M. de Calonne, 159 ff.; publishes his *De la caisse d'escompte*, 160; a pupil in Panchaud's school of finance, 160; excels in assimilating the thoughts of others, 160; more statesman than writer, 160; his first interview with Calonne, 162, 163; at Calonne's suggestion, writes against the Spanish Bank of Saint Charles, 163, 164; his loyalty to Panchaud, 164, 165; never used the success of his books to speculate himself, 165; did not write against his belief, 165; his peculiar relations with Calonne, 165, 166; suggests to Calonne the convocation of a national assembly, 166

His paper on his relations with Calonne read by Périgord at Panchaud's house, 167–70; his services declined by Fred-

erick the Great, 170; his view of the future of Prussia, 169, 170; in Berlin, an 'amphibious diplomat,' 171; seeks to teach Frederick William II how to govern, 171; his tract on this subject his most perfect work, 171, 172, 173; it embodies his ideal monarchy, 173; his *La Monarchie Prussienne*, 173, 174, 183; rejoices at the news of the convocation of the Notables, 174; returns to Paris, 175, 176; his plan for a national assembly, 177, and how it differed from Calonne's, 177, 178; his feeling against the nobility, 178, 179; constitutes himself 'instructor of the nation,' 180; publishes his *Dénonciation de l'agiotage*, etc., 180; his arrest ordered, 181; goes to Liège, and is joined there by Mme. de Nehra, 181, 182; returns to Paris with her when she secures the revocation of the order, 183; feels that he alone can save royalty, 185; his scheme to unite king and people against the privileged class, misunderstood, 185, 186; congratulates the Duc d'Orléans on his action, 187; declares that his day is coming, 188; his universal unpopularity, 189; his attack upon Necker and the Parliament of Paris, 189, 190; preparing for the election of a national assembly, 191, 192; his hopes of election, 192; is almost reconciled to his father, to whom he dedicated his work on Prussia, 192; goes to Aix as candidate of the Third Estate, 193; the effect produced there by his arrival, 193, 194; attends the private assembly of the nobility, 193–95; opposed by the aristocrats, publishes a defiant reply to them, and is excluded from the assembly, 194, 195; his affair with Mme. Le Jay leads to the departure of Mme. de Nehra, 195, 196, 197; prints his secret correspondence from Berlin at Mme. Le Jay's suggestion, 197; the consequent scandal recalls him to Paris, 198; returns to Aix and receives a hearty welcome, 198, 199; at Marseilles during the uprising of the people, 199–201; how he restored tranquillity, 200; recalled to Aix, reëstablishes order there, 201; is elected to the States-General for both Aix and Marseilles, and chooses the former, 202

At the opening session of the States-General, 203, 204; publishes the first number of his *Journal des États-Généraux*, 203, 204, 205; his purpose in the publication, to establish liberty of opinion, 205, 206; at the second session of the States, 206 ff.; his *Journal* condemned as abusive, and published copies ordered suppressed, 209; issues the *Lettres du Comte de Mirabeau à ses Commettants*, 209; at the third session of the States, suggests constituting a National Assembly, 212, 213; his plans, 213, 214; desires to become the incarnation of the Assembly, 214; his collaborators, 214; his addresses during the session, 214; his object a revolution, not against, but within,

the monarchy, 215; his dream of being an all-powerful minister, 215, 216; decides to attempt to win Necker to his plan, 217; negotiates with him through Malouet, 217, 218; rebuffed by Necker, 218; calls upon the Assembly to organize itself, 219; supports the idea of conciliation of the Third Estate with the clergy, 219; becomes the guide of the Assembly, 220; the sources of his influence, 220, 221; puts forward Sieyès to demand that the Assembly organize, 221, 222; proposes the name, 'Assembly of the Representatives of the People,' but it is not accepted, 222, 223; his reply to the Marquis de Dreux-Brezé, 225, 226; his comment on the King's action of June 23, 227; in the Assembly, denounces the presence of Swiss and German troops, 228–30; he alone keeps his head amid the orgies of the beginning of the Revolution, 231; elements of the constitutional system he proposed to establish, 232, 233; his proposed Declaration of Rights disappoints by its moderation, 233; becomes involved in a contest with the Assembly, 233, 234; effect upon him of the suicide of Sophie de Monnier, 234, 235; supports Necker's financial scheme, 237, 238; prophesies the death of the King and Queen, 238; his impressions of the Duc d'Orléans, 239; the Queen's aversion to him invincible, 239; accuses the Queen of counter-revolutionary conspiracy, 240, 241; warns President Mounier of the march of the women on Versailles, 241 ff.; his attitude during the invasion of the château by the mob, 243 ff.; proposes to get the royal family away from Paris, 245, 246; his plan approved by the Comte de Provence, 246; his activity at this time, 246; hated and slandered by the Court, 246, 247; tries to win over La Fayette, 247; his proposed lists of ministers, 247; acts as if he were the head of the government, 248; his ambition arouses distrust, and he is beaten, 249, 250

On the most critical moment of the Revolution, 251; not deceived by the delirious optimism of Paris, 251; his vain search for a leader to supply his place, 251, 252; is said to have been promised 50,000 francs a month to assist the cause of the King and the Court, by the Comte de Provence, 252; his loss of physical and moral force and of faith in himself, 252, 253; Mercy-d'Argenteau, Austrian Ambassador, advises the Queen to approach him, 253, 254; his meeting with the ambassador, 254; his letter to the Queen, 255, 256; his later intercourse with the Queen, 257 ff.; the question of the recompense to be paid to him, 257–59; his speech in the Assembly on the question of the rights of war and peace, 260, 261, 262; his duel in words with Barnave, 263, 264; his proposed decree concerning the rights of war

and peace voted by the Assembly, 264; the Queen advises him to come to an understanding with La Fayette, 265; the Queen attributes to him her scheme to induce the Emperor of Austria to make an armed demonstration on the French frontier, 265, 266; his interview with the Queen at Saint-Cloud, 266–68; his plan for the royal family's departure from Paris approved by her and the King, 267, 268; is accused of treason, 268; despite the outcry against him, continues to hope to govern France in collaboration with the King, 269; brings about the fall of Necker and other ministers, 269, 270; his correspondence with the Queen, 270; his plans defeated by the interference of La Fayette and the sovereigns' failure to understand him and fear of him, 270, 271; retires from the Court, 271; his speech on the tricolor horrifies the Queen, who refuses to see him again, 271, 272; his return to the popular cause rapturously welcomed, 272; is again persuaded to advise the Queen, 272; his recommendations, 273, 274; effect upon him of the receipt of money from the King, 274; his reasoning power becomes inpaired and his strength lacks direction and control, 275; plunges into pleasure with frenzy, 275, 276; his popularity among the people and in the Assembly, 276; is elected leader of the National Guard battalion from the Chaussée d'Antin, 276; in Jan., 1791, is chosen President of the National Assembly, 276; his serenity and strength suddenly renewed, 276; becomes the chosen sovereign of the French people, 277; risks his popularity by opposing a suggested law prohibiting 'emigration,' 277; denounced at the Jacobin Club, forces his adversaries to submit, 278; never so assured of his strength, 278; his approaching death reported, 278

His sudden illness, unskillfully treated, 279, 280; said to have been poisoned, 280; public interest in his condition intense, 280; his last hours and death, 280–84; public excitement in the night succeeding his death, 284, 285; the Assembly votes unanimously to consecrate the church of Sainte-Geneviève as the sepulchre of great men and to place him there first of all, 285; his funeral, 285; his body ordered to be withdrawn from the Panthéon (Sainte-Geneviève) and that of Marat substituted (1794), 286; his body placed in an unmarked grave in the cemetery of Clamart, and never found, 286

Mirabeau, Jean-Antoine Riquetti, Marquis de (the 'Silver Collar'), *M.*'s grandfather, 6–8, 14

Mirabeau, Comte Louis-Alexandre de, 53

Mirabeau, Victor de, *M.*'s son, birth of, 75, 83; death of, and its effect on his grandfather, 115, 116, 134, and on his father, 117, 125

Mirabeau, Victor Riquetti, Mar-

quis de, *M.*'s father ('L'Ami des Hommes'), his dispute with his wife concerning their respective families, 10 ff.; his notebooks, 13; hears *M.*'s 5-year-old discourse, 14; his social opinions, 15; and M. Poussin, 16; begins *L'Ami des Hommes*, 17; public reception of the book, 18–20, 21, 22; his *Théorie de l'Impôt* read to M. Quesnay and others at Versailles, 21 ff.; its publication leads to his arrest, 29, and exile to Bignon, 30; letters from Poisson, 31, 32, de Sigrais, 32–34, Abbé Choquard, 35–37, and Grevin, 38, on various aspects of *M.*'s behavior; Bachaumont on, 38, relations of, with his son, 41; imprisons his wife in a convent in Limoges, 41, 58; at d'Aulan's request, consents to *M.*'s release from Île de Ré, and to his joining the Corsican expedition, 46; letter of his brother to, on *M.*'s visit to him at Aix, 52; consents to his brother receiving *M.* at Mirabeau, 54, 55; himself receives *M.* at the Château d'Aigueperse, 57; his tumult of plans for reforming the government of France, 57; his dealings with his family summarized, 58, 59; turns to *M.* to negotiate between its warring members, 59; his attitude toward *M.*, 60; his conduct described by his wife, 61; with *M.*, organizes a court of arbitration at Aigueperse, 62; his mode of dealing with the insurrection at Mirabeau, 67, 68; orders *M.* to leave Aix on pain of arrest, 73; procures *M.*'s arrest and exile to Manosque, 75; is privy to *M.*'s imprisonment in the Château d'If, 79; in league with *M.*'s wife to prolong his imprisonment, 81, 82; procures *M.*'s removal to Fort de Joux, 86; reduces his allowance, 87; deaf to *M.*'s appeal, 92, 93; correspondence with his brother, 92, 93; has *M.*'s proposed place of detention changed from Lyons to Doullens, 105; and *M.*'s escape from Dijon, 108; procures his wife's commitment to a convent in Saint-Michel, 114; his cynicism, 114; effect of his grandson's death on, 115; letters to and from his brother, 116, 117, 135, 136–38; *M.*'s letter to, on his son's death, 117, 118; why he desired to set *M.* free, 126, 127; obtains authority to fix *M.*'s residence, 127, 128; humbled by his wife's triumph, consents to receive *M.*, 134, 135; their life at Bignon, 135; his anxiety as to *M.*'s future, 136; his change of tone regarding *M.*, 140; his varying attitudes toward *M.*, 143 ff.; *M.* quoted on his abusive letters about him, 145; his letters against *M.* used to support the Countess's appeal from the Aix decision, 147; resigns his paternal authority to Louis XVI, 151; his accounts as guardian, 151; almost reconciled to *M.*, 192; death of, 235; mentioned, 2, 3, 4 *n.*, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 42, 45, 48, 50, 65, 66, 74, 81, 84, 99, 104, 106, 111, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 141, 152, 182

Mirabeau, Chevalier (afterwards

Bailiff) de, on his brother's success, 18; *M.*'s visit to him at Aix, 52, 54, 55; induces his brother to receive *M.* at Aigueperse, 57; letters from and to his brother, 115, 116, 117, 135, 136, 138; conceives the idea of reuniting *M.* and his wife, 116, 117; quoted on *M.*'s return to Mirabeau, 141; and the negotiations between *M.* and his wife, 142 ff.; mentioned, 2, 3, 5, 6, 17, 48, 49, 60, 69, 92, 124, 125, 126, 127, 134, 138, 140

Mirabeau, Marquise de, *M.*'s grandmother, 16

Mirabeau, Marquise de, *M.*'s mother, discusses with her husband the eminence of their respective families, 10 ff.; her forbears and her fortune, 11; lives apart from her husband, 58; her dissolute conduct, 58; imprisoned by her husband in a convent at Limoges, 58, 59; *M.*'s stormy interview with, 60, 61; accompanies *M.* to Saillant, 61; discourses to him of his father's conduct, 61; her actions an element in the Marquis's desire to obtain his son's freedom, 127; obtains an order for judicial separation from her husband, 134; supplies *M.* with funds, 142; mentioned, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 15, 16, 17, 74, 86, 92, 93, 104, 111

Mirabeau, *M.* on the necessity of perpetuating the name of, 123

Mirabeau, Château of, *M.*'s return to, in 1770, 47 ff.; *M.* received by his uncle at, 55; *M.*'s second return to, after eight years, 140

Mirabeau, manor of, *M.*'s method of dealing with insurrection at, 67 ff.; communal election at, 79

Mirabeaux, the, *M.*'s youthful speech on the history of, 14

Miromesnil, Armand-T. de, 151, 258

Monnier, Sophie, Marquise de, *M.*'s first meeting with, 87; her past, 88; carried off her feet by *M.*, 89; *M.*'s first inclination for, rearoused by Saint-Mauris, 90, 91; her relations with *M.* become intimate, 93 ff.; hides *M.* in her apartments after he is ordered back to Fort de Joux, 99; resents her husband's orders against *M.* and goes to Dijon, whither *M.* follows her, 101; under surveillance by her mother at Dijon, 101 ff.; returns to Pontarlier on *M.*'s detention at Dijon, 105; urges *M.* to go abroad with her, 105; tries to join *M.* in Switzerland, but fails, 107; joins him at Verrières, 108, and goes with him to Amsterdam, 109, 110; their retreat in Amsterdam discovered, 112; her father offers to pardon her if she will abandon *M.*, 112; on her refusal, is condemned by default for adultery and sentenced to confinement for life, 112; arrested, tries to poison herself, 113; taken to Paris and imprisoned, 113; her daughter born in captivity, 118; her correspondence with *M.* in Vincennes, 118, 119; transferred to convent at Gien, 121; refuses to return to her husband, 124; effect of her daughter's death

on her relations with *M.*, 125; her life of resignation begins, 126, 127; her meeting with *M.* at Gien after his release from Vincennes, 129 ff.; their changed sentiments, 131; their parting, 132; sentence of Pontarlier magistrates against *M.* and her, revoked, 139; her *dot* restored on conditions, 139; her suicide, and its effect on *M.*, 234, 235; mentioned, 72, 123, 136, 137

Monnier, Mlle. de (daughter of the Marquis de Monnier), and her father, 91. And *see* Valdahon, Mme. de

Monnier, Marquis de, why he married Sophie de Ruffey, 90, 91; welcomes *M.* as a friend of the family, 93, 94; and *M.*'s tale of why he was hiding in his house, 99, 100; his orders to his servants thereupon, 100; accused by Sophie, assents to her demands, 100, 101; offers to pardon her if she will abandon *M.*, 112; on her refusal, prosecutes her for adultery, 112; Sophie refuses to return to, 124; mentioned, 87, 88, 97, 98, 107, 137

Monnier, Marquise de, the Marquis's first wife, 91

Montherot, M. de, provost-marshal of Bourgogne, gives a ball at Dijon, 101, 102; *M.* summoned before, 102, 103; mentioned, 104

Montmorin, M. de, 66, 185, 187, 198, 218, 247, 260, 270, 272

Montmorin, Mme. de, 203

Montperreux, M. de, 88

Montpeyret, M. de, and the Marquis de Mirabeau, 114

Morichelli, Signorina, 275, 279

Mottet, M., in the insurrection at Mirabeau, 68, 69

Mounier, Jean-J., and the invasion of women, 241, 242, 243, 244; mentioned, 213, 219, 230, 238

Muron, M., inspector of police, 108

Narbonne-Lara, Louis, Comte de, 160

National Assembly, the, organized by deputies of the Third Estate, 222, 224; royal session of June 23, 1789, 224–26; decrees of session of August 4, 1789, 231, 232; attitude of, toward *M.*, 233; its reception of his bill for the Declaration of the Rights of Man, 232, and of his defense of the King's absolute veto, 233; Vicomte de Mirabeau's proposal to exclude members of, from its successor, 236, 237; adopts Necker's plan to avert bankruptcy, 237, 238; and the invasion of the women of Paris, 241 ff.; *M.*'s plans defeated in, 249, 250; debate on rights of war and peace in (May, 1790), 260 ff.; *M.*'s victory in, 264; *M.* chosen president of (Jan., 1791), 276; adopts the proposal of Paris as to a national Panthéon, 285

Navarre, Mlle., 53

Necker, Jacques, how he won popularity, 161; *M.*'s campaign of letters against, 181, 188; recalls the Parliament of Paris, 190; his perplexity and hesitation, 191; criticized by *M.*, 208; his hatred of *M.*, 215; *M.*'s interview with, after Malouet's

negotiations, 217, 218; dismissed, 229; his plan to avert bankruptcy by voluntary contributions, supported by *M.*, and adopted by the Assembly, 237, 238; the sole obstacle to combination between *M.* and the Queen, 269; resigns, 269, 270; mentioned, 132, 133, 159, 161, 177, 180, 182, 206, 207, 213, 247
Necker, Mme. Jacques, 167
Nehra, Mme. de, *M.*'s liaison with, 152 ff.; goes to England with *M.*, 154; goes thence to France in *M.*'s interest, 158, 159; joins *M.* in Liège, 181 ff.; goes to Paris and obtains revocation of order of arrest against *M.*, 183; why she deserted *M.*, 196; mentioned, 165, 170, 175
Neuchâtel, *M.* at, 140
Nivernais, Louis-J. Mancini, Duc de, 23, 34, 45, 64, 104, 105, 126, 127
Noailles, Marquis de, 156
Nobility, the, the universal enemy, 216; *M.* would reduce it to impotence, and how, 216; discord in the assembly of, 224. And *see* Privileged orders
Notables, assembly of, *M.* quoted on, 174, 176; Calonne's purpose in convoking, 177, 178; representatives of Third Estate in, 178; *M.* on the composition of, 179; opening of, and *M.*'s pamphlet, *Dénonciation de l'agiotage*, 180, 181; dissolved, 184, and reconvoked, 191
Nouvelle France, La, citadel of, Sophie de Monnier's daughter born at, 118

Orléans, Philippe, Duc d' ('Égalité'), exiled, 187; *M.*'s opinion of, 239; mentioned, 246, 254
Ormesson, M. d', 162
'Ourragan, M. l',' name applied to *M.*, 67

Pailly, Mme. de, 20, 30, 61, 120, 127, 140
Panchaud, M., *M.* a pupil in his school of finance, 160; his financial theories, 164; *M.* faithful to, in his bankruptcy, 164, 165; Abbé de Périgord reads *M.*'s paper on Calonne at the house of, 167–70; mentioned, 159, 192
Panthéon, the. *See* Sainte-Geneviève
Paris, *M.* in (1783), 151 ff.; *M.*'s return to, in 1787, 176; *M.* again returns to, 184; riots in, 185, 277; *M.* recalled to, from Aix, by the secret correspondence affair, 195 ff.; Swiss and German troops take possession of, 228; *M.*'s address, July 8, 1789, on the dangers created by their presence in, 228–30; women of, march on Versailles, 241 ff.; reception of news of *M.*'s critical illness in, 280, 283, 284, 285
Paris, Department of, proposes consecration of Sainte-Geneviève as the sepulchre of great men, *M.* to be the first to be placed there, 285
Parliament of Aix, hears appeal of *M.*'s wife and decides in her favor, 147–50; *M.* appeals from decision of, 151
Parliament of Paris, decides in favor of *M.*'s mother against his father, 134; votes to beg the King to assemble the States-General, 184, 185; *M.*'s pam-

phlet against, 189, 190; recalled by Necker, 190; its decrees on the composition of the States-General, 190, 191; orders prosecution of *M.* for publishing the secret correspondence, 198
Parliament of Troyes, exiled, 185
Pellenc, M., *M.*'s secretary, 214, 275, 280
Périer, the brothers, 164
Périgord, Abbé de, reads *M.*'s story of his relations with Calonne at Panchaud's house, 167–70; mentioned, 160, 165, 181
Pétion de Villeneuve, Jérome, 240, 260, 261, 281, 284
Philip II of Spain, *M.* writes history of, 120
Pierre-Buffière, M. de, name given to *M.* by his father, 32–34, 35–37, 40 ff., 47 ff., 52 ff.
Pitt, William, Prime Minister of Great Britain, his great struggle against a hostile majority, 157; mentioned, 282
Polignac, Duchesse de, 184
Polignac, Yolande, Princesse de, 133
Pompadour, Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, Marquise de, 24, 27, 133
Pompignan, Jacques Le Franc, Marquis de, 66
Pontarlier, *M.* voluntarily returns to prison at, 137; effect of his return in the city, 137 ff.; magistrates of, revoke sentence against *M.* and Sophie de Monnier, 139. And *see* Monnier, Sophie, Marquise de
Portalis, Jean-E.-M., 146, 147, 149, 194
Poussin, M., secretary to *M.*'s father and tutor to *M.*, letter of, to the former, asking to be relieved of his tutorship, 31, 32; mentioned, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 28, 29
Press, liberty of the, established by the strife over *M.*'s *Journal*, 209, 210
Privileged orders in France, and the throne, 178; *M.*'s attitude toward, 179, 180; discrimination between, and the Third Estate in States-General, 204; meet apart at the second session, 211; appeal to, by Third Estate, but the conferences come to nothing, 216, 217, 218; further fruitless conferences, 220, 221; disregard summons to join the Third Estate, 222; their day of sacrifice, 231
Proudhon, M., 258
Provence, Comte de (afterwards Louis XVIII), approves *M.*'s plan to get the King out of Paris, 246; *M.* and, 252; mentioned, 254, 258
Provence, rise of Third Estate in, 68 ff.; assembly of communities in, 69; approaching election to States-General in, 193, 194; *M.*'s return to, in March, 1789, 198 ff. And *see* Aix, Marseilles
Provence, nobility of, *M.* at the private assembly of, 193, 194; obtains suspension of the session of the States of Provence, 195; votes exclusion of *M.* from its assembly, 195
Provence, States of, *M.* at session of, in Jan., 1789, 194; the session suspended by the King, 195
Prussia, the enigma of the future, according to *M.*, 170; *M.*'s

penetrating analysis of the history of, under Frederick William II, 174; publication of *M.*'s work on (1788), 183. And *see* Berlin

Quesnay, Francis, the 'Confucius of Europe,' visit to, at Versailles, 21, 24 ff.; *M.*'s father reads his *Théorie de l'Impôt* to, 27 ff.

Rebuffel, M., 200
Rémigny, Mme. de, 56
Reybaz, M., 214
Richelieu, Armand, Duc de, 63, 64
Riquetti, Jean, merchant of Marseilles, 10
Riquetti, Thomas, 10
Riquetti, the, 8, 10
Robespierre, Maxmilien de, 216, 260
Roldans, Mme. des, 71
Rolland, Armande, quoted, 275, 276
Rousseau, Jean-J., *La Nouvelle Heloïse*, 95; mentioned, 112
Ruault, Mme. de, 122
Ruffey, Sophie de. *See* Monnier, Sophie, Marquise de
Ruffey, Mme. de, Sophie de Monnier's mother, at Dijon, 101, 102, 104
Ruffey, Mlle. de, canoness, Sophie's sister, 104, 105, 107
Ruffey, M. de, Sophie's father, 88, 93, 107

Sabathier, Abbé Antoine, 184
Saillant, Marquis du, *M.*'s brother-in-law, 59, 127, 131, 139
Salliant, Marquise du, *M.*'s sister, letter of *M.* to, on his father's letters against him, 145; mentioned, 56, 59, 61, 126, 134, 266, 280
Saillant, Mlle. du, 275
Saint-Bélin, Mme. de, 101, 102
Saint-Cannat (Provence), 199
Saint-Charles, Bank of, *M.*'s pamphlets against, 163, 164
Saint-Mathieu, name assumed by *M.* and Sophie in Amsterdam, 109, 112, 113
Saint-Mauris, M. de, governor of Fort de Joux, treats *M.* as a guest and accords him full liberty, 87 ff.; tells *M.* the story of Sophie de Monnier's marriage, 90, 91; his revenge upon *M.* for abusing his liberty, 97, 98; mentioned, 104, 139
Saint-Vincent, Robert de, urges the calling of the States-General, 186
Sainte-Geneviève, consecrated as the National Panthéon, 285; *M.*'s the first body to be placed there, 285; *M.*'s body removed therefrom, and Marat's substituted, 286
Saintes-Claires, convent at Gien, Sophie de Monnier transferred to, 121
Sandoncq, M. de, 88
Scheldt (river), *M.*'s pamphlet on the freedom of, irritates the Queen, 158
Ségur, Louis-P., Comte (Marquis) de, 132
Seneff, Comte de, 181
Sheridan, Richard B., 157
Sieyès, Abbé, sent by the Third Estate to summon the other orders to join them, 221, 222; mentioned, 247
Sigrais, M. de, *M.*'s 'tutor and jailer,' letter of, to *M.*'s father

on his pupil's disposition and character, 232–34
Sigrais, Mme. de, 32, 33
Sinking Fund Office, created by Panchaud, 164
Société des Trente, and the election to the States-General, 192
Soliers, Baptiste l'Hermite de, 10
Sophie-Gabrielle, daughter of *M.* and Sophie de Monnier, birth of, 118; death of, and its effect, 124, 125
Staël, Mme. de, on *M.* on his way to the opening of the States-General, 203, 204; mentioned, 256
States-General, the, decrees of Parliament of Paris concerning composition of, 190, 191; *M.*'s candidacy for, 192; *M.* and the approaching election for, in Provence, 193–95; opening mass of, 203, 204; first meeting of, in the Menus Plaisirs, 206–08. And *see* National Assembly, Third Estate
Swiss guard, the, at Versailles, 24
Switzerland, *M.*'s escape to, 107, 108

Tacitus, 120
Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles-M. de, *M.*'s first meeting with, 66, 67; letters of *M.* to, 174; mentioned, 192, 247, 281, 282
Tennis Court, Oath of the, 224
Tertre de Lessart, M., 270
Third Estate, the, in the insurrection at Mirabeau, 68, 69; its existence denied, 133; only four representatives of, in the assembly of Notables, 178; and the Parliament of Paris, 186; in Provence, and the election to the States-General, 193–95; deputies of, in the procession of the States-General, 203, and at the opening mass, 204; at the first session, 206–08; action of electors of, in Paris, on the Council's decree concerning *M.*'s *Journal*, 209; alone in the Menus Plaisirs at the second session, 211–13; suspicious of *M.*'s real rôle, 215; decides to appeal to the two privileged orders, 216; the conferences come to nothing, 218, 219; deputies of, adopt *M.*'s motion to organize as a National Assembly, 219; invited by the King to confer again with the other orders, follows *M.* blindly in acceding to the invitation, 219, but again nothing comes of the conference, 220, 221; on *M.*'s motion, sends Sieyès to address a last summons to nobility and clergy to join them, 221, 222; on their failure to do so, effects an organization, 222; adopts the name of National Assembly, 224
Tibullus, 120
Tourrettes, Mlle. des, 77
Tourves, Château de, 71
Tricolor, the, *M.*'s speech on, and the Queen, 271, 272
Trosne, M. de, 26
Turgot, Anne-R.-J., 26, 122, 132, 133, 161, 164, 177, 268

Valbelle, Horace, Comte de, 71, 104, 116, 141
Valdahon, Le Bœuf de, 91
Valdahon, Mme. Le Bœuf de, M. de Monnier's daughter by his first wife, 137
Valfons, M. de, 246, 247

Vallet, Abbé, 234
Van Haren, Guillaume, 15
Vassan, Mme. de, *M.*'s maternal grandmother, 57; the Marquis de Mirabeau's dealings with, 58, 59; death of, 61
Vassan, Mlle. de. *See* Mirabeau, Marquise de
Vassan, M. de, *M.*'s maternal grandfather, 12
Vassans, the, 12
Vence, Comtesse de, advises *M.* in Gassaud affair, 76, 77
Vergennes, Charles Gravier, Comte de, *M.*'s tract addressed to, 140; mentioned, 113, 156, 159
Verrières, Sophie de Monnier joins *M.* at, 108
Versailles, *M.*'s first visit to, with his father, 22–29; *M.* appears at Court at (1771), 63 ff.
Versailles, Treaty of, 156
Vesvrottes, President de, 107
Victoire, Sister (Gien), 130
Villeneuve-Mouans, M. de, organizes a cabal against Mme. de Cabris, 78; thrashed by *M.*, 79; his revenge, 79, 81
Villereau, Chevalier de, on *M.*'s military talent, 46
Vincennes, *M.* confined in fortress of (1777), 114, 117 ff.; *M.* released from, after 42 months, 127, 128
Virieu, M. de, 271
Volney, M., 236, 237
Voltaire, Arouet de, 20, 88

Women, *M.*'s lack of respect for, in youth, 33, 34
Women of Paris, their invasion of Versailles, and its sequel, 241 ff.

Ysabeau, Dr. (Gien), 129, 131, 234